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SAVAGE PARADISE





SAVAGE PARADISE

BY MARGARET MATCHES

*"There's a schooner in the offing,
With her topsails shot with fire,
And my heart has gone aboard her
For the Islands of Desire."*

— RICHARD HOFY

Illustrated by

NORMAN GUTHRIE RUDOLPH



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TO G. N.
WHO OBJECTS TO MY ADVENTURING AFAR

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SAVAGE PARADISE



I

WHERE BLUE WATERS ARE

FIRST it had been Mexico, whence I returned the richer by the imperishable memory of certain moon-wan oleanders. Next, three years later, came the Antilles, especially Martinique.

It was Martinique that implanted the love of the tropics deep in my soul. For eight months now, since my return, I had never looked at a sunset down the paved corridor of a street, or over chimney-pots, without a wrench at my heart. I had resumed my excellent job in New York. I took the 7:59 again and the nightly 5:55. I watched other commuters sleeping uncomfortably, chin on chest, gathering energy so that they could go on earning enough money to get tired out for an endless sequence of days. Girls as well as men. But I could not forget how sunset streaks a jade sky with streamers of gold and rose and wispy black over the Caribbean, or how the Southern Cross rises clear and flawless down there.

Now, again, the voice was whispering, "Let's go!" And I knew the jig was up.

That night out came the Atlas. I had one general objective: to find a place as far removed from New York as was geographically possible. My special objective was some new

destination that fired my imagination. Well, there was the island of New Guinea. All I knew about New Guinea was that it was a heathen, primeval country somewhere in the Antipodes. But it certainly was far enough away. It was obviously tropical. And, chiefly, no one I knew had ever heard of any one who had been there. New Guinea touched me, and especially I wanted to see Port Moresby in Papua.

I estimated my resources. Not much—several hundred dollars, if I sold a good diamond. I parted with the stone without regret.

I would set forth aboard a freighter, for two reasons. First, because I wanted to, and second because, if you are going from the Atlantic seaboard to Australia, you take what you can get, regardless.

Followed a long succession of discouraging noon-hours spent in steamship agencies and at ships' headquarters, hunting for a ship that would take me to Australia. I had a notion that Sydney would be the place from which to take my bearings. I soon discovered that freighters are sternly opposed to carrying a woman. It began to look as if I couldn't do it—not from New York.

Then, unexpectedly, I found my freighter. She was bound for Sydney, Australia. A month elapsed before she sailed.

Dire prognostications as to what would befall me, a lone young person on such a mad expedition, dampened my spirit not at all. I was going to shed the banalities of commonplace existence while the bloom was still on my desire. I was going to follow my heart into the horizon.

§

It was a prematurely hot spring day. The Brooklyn docks reeked of tar and oakum and water-rotted wood, and of a

cargo known nebulously as "miscellaneous." I had been told to be aboard ship at eleven A. M. So here I was. All necessary farewells had been said the day before, when my ship should have sailed but didn't. I was glad of it. Infinitely preferable to be alone, now. I mounted the swaying gangplank to the ship's deck.

She was an eight thousand ton freighter. The decks were piled with bales and crates. Winches whirled and rattled busily. Several of the sweating crew and stevedores took time off to flash a white-toothed smile at me. Skirting an open hatch, picking my way carefully amid the cargo, I reached the little saloon. It was ugly but prodigiously clean. My cabin was ready, my luggage scattered about.

That afternoon we sailed. And I the only woman and the only passenger on this transpacific freighter. Alone I leaned on the deck-rail and watched the Brooklyn docks recede. I was cutting myself off from my routined world of security for I knew not what. No matter! Anyway, I had youth, superb health, and memories of other ventures that had turned out well.

Ecstasy of freedom! We passed the Statue of Liberty. Liberty meant this to me at the moment—plowing south through glory of sunsets, somber nights, and pearl-tinted dawnings to where blue waters are. I turned without regret from the most famous sky-line in the world.



II

CLEARED FOR SYDNEY

TO TRAVEL across the world on a freighter sounds formidable. It isn't. Personally, not being a lover of crowds, I looked upon the forced lack of multitudinous companionship as an asset. Besides, I was the star boarder on the packet, among as fine a group of British officers and gentlemen as has ever been assembled on a ship, bar none. I found out after two days that they liked me. And I found out after forty days that they still liked me, which was much more to the point. I, of course, had expected to like them, but they had not expected to like me, they not having much use for a woman at sea.

Those officers were a sterling crowd. The master was a quiet, rather lonely man in his thirties. Across the pocket of his tunic he wore a band of striped ribbon, on the end of which I recognized the blue-and-white of the D.S.C. I never heard him raise his voice above a conversational tone, but I watched him, enthralled, one day, while he cleaned and greased three bright revolvers.

Jones, the second mate, was Welsh. He had an undershot jaw—God help the woman that tried her will against that

jaw—and keen, good-humored brown eyes. He, too, came of a line of sea captains, and his life was built upon the stern, relentless code of Welsh forebears.

An incident he told me of his childhood showed the schooling of the iron man. He was a little lad when his father first took him to sea, in a windjammer. One night a storm rose, the ship wallowed in the sea, the wind tore like a mad thing, the lightning pierced the black night. The lad down in the cabin alone was terrorized. He began to cry. The father entered, slamming the door against the tempest, his sou'wester running rivers. He saw his son in tears. "What's this!" he roared. Hysterical, terrified sobs in reply. A clout over the head sent the boy reeling. "Learn, lad," bellowed the father above the tempest, "there's naught ever to fear at sea!"

Martin, the third officer, never did learn to speak to the lady without blushing. His brogue was so strong that I used half the time to make him repeat what he said. But he doggedly kept on trying to make himself entertaining whenever he had a chance. His people were County Kerry farmers. He had run away to sea nearly ten years before—he was but twenty-two now. He was tall and strongly built, with blue eyes and a mop of curly, unruly blond hair. Alas, the skipper sheared his blond mane one day, to the complete satisfaction of every one but myself. Martin felt twice the man with his curls gone.

Every British ship has its "queer chap." On this one it was the chief engineer. He was an enormously tall man; a loose lock of black hair fell always over his somber brow; his brass buttons and the gilt braid on his cuffs managed always somehow to look lackluster, as if dejectedly reflecting his melancholy. Only once did I see him smile. He would ap-

pear at mess, seat himself opposite the master, include us all in one unsmiling nod, and lean on the table with his forearms, his hands clasped in front of him. Thus, with his eyes fixed on the cloth, he would move only to accept his plate or consume its contents. But it was his great hands that fascinated me—they were the hands of a giant of strength.

Life was surprisingly comfortable aboard this cargo ship. She was immaculately clean. My cabin was large and breeze-swept. An enormous deck fore and aft afforded room for exercise in the form of dog-trot promenades and hard-fought tennis. Under a canvas awning on the skipper's deck, just below the bridge, I spent long, lazy hours, when we struck the Caribbean, stretched out with a book in my lap but with my eyes usually on the blue sea and sky before me. As we plowed south, nightly I watched the Southern Cross rise higher and higher over the horizon, until finally it dominated the constellations like a glorious voice above a choir. And through the long, soft nights, with every hour that the bells struck off came the lookout's tenor call, "Lights are bright, sir," and from the bridge the long-drawn reply, "Ay-ye!"

One evening we reached Colón, too late to enter the Panama Canal. Shabby little Colón somehow beautiful in the sunset. Next day came the slow, monotonous passage through the Canal. Then, the weary heat and tiresome delays over, we were outside and before us spread the Pacific like a vast lake, island-dotted.

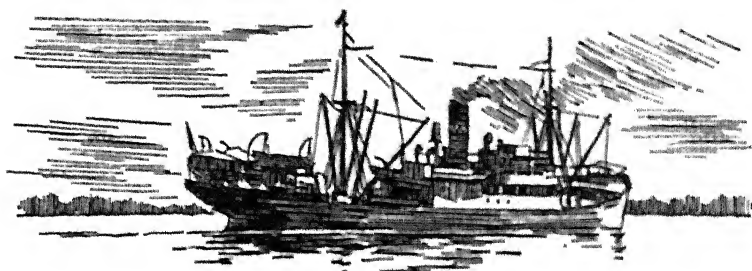
It was nearing sunset as we entered upon the serene waters. Against a rosy background two straight lines of pelicans followed their leader, homing for the night. The good steady throb of the ship's engines came rhythmically

again as she resumed her normal speed. There were still five weeks ahead of us, to Sydney.

Leaving New York, I had felt weary of everything. And now here I was in a world which knew no such thing as time and in which space was a mere incident in the scheme of things. But in those weeks at sea I recaptured what I foolishly thought I had lost—a prodigious love of life.

One day, when there seemed no land in all the world, an albatross appeared above our ship, gliding serenely . . . splendidly . . . never flapping a wing, never alighting, apparently needing neither resting place nor food. Two days later its mate joined the giant bird. The skipper said they were souls of dead sailors.

And so, after some five weeks, we reached Sydney. They were good weeks.



III

RAINBOW VEIL

GETTING into Australia is easy, but getting out of Australia is quite another matter, particularly if you are an unattended woman bound for the Mandated Territory of New Guinea. If I had been left entirely on my own resources I might have spent some tedious hours in untying red tape. But I wasn't, thanks to J. B. T.

He was literally the first person I saw at close range in Sydney—not counting the customs officer of course. As the skipper and I were about to go ashore, the cabin-boy announced a caller, and into the cabin walked quite the tallest, leanest Englishman I have ever seen. I shall always associate yellow chamois gloves (one worn and one carried), a light cane, a dotted blue silk handkerchief—oh, I shall always associate everything that is well-dressed and great-hearted and debonair with J. B. T.

He stopped short at seeing me in the skipper's cabin; entirely, self-possessedly at home there. Ensuing conversation revealed that he had at one time made a voyage across the world with this same skipper, and they had formed a friendship that lasted. Endless weeks at sea with one person's companionship—a semi-enforced companionship at

that, since you must always be under each other's feet—are an acid test of character and disposition. J. B. T. and I took a shine to each other from the first.

That he happened to be in Sydney was only chance; in fact it was only chance that he ever happened to be anywhere. He has written about his "windjammerings" over the seven seas—perhaps you have read his account. A few months before I met him he had come to Australia from Tahiti. When my freighter finally sailed away down the coast, en route to New Zealand and England once more, it was into J. B. T.'s care that her master put this wandering, mad American who was bent upon giving up all familiar comfort and security for God-knew-what in the South Pacific. And J. B. T. was very conscientious about his charge. Indeed, we had a glorious time of it. Every day he would come to my hotel, looking as if he had stepped out of Bond Street, and carrying a bouquet of violets still romantically dewy from the water-squirter that the flower vendor on Martin Place used with enthusiastic imagination. For what is lovelier, of a sunny forenoon, than violets with even the illusion of dew thereon? My stock was very high in Sydney.

It took me three days to get the hang of the language around me. It has the same foundation as English, indeed the printed word *looks* like English. But I defy any Briton or American who has dropped upon Sydney to understand immediately its Anglo-Cockney. And I was just as unintelligible to the people there. Yet Sydney is afflicted with Americomania. Familiar trade names look down from sign-boards. My hotel was run on an American scale—except for prices—and proclaimed the fact. American films are shown at the movie palaces. Second-rate American theatrical troops present New York successes, with more hilarity than

finesse. American jazz bands are features of night clubs and tea dances. Even American chewing-gum is there, translated, quaintly, into "chewing sweet." A famous five-cent Philadelphia weekly is the choice magazine (at one-and-six a copy). Cheap American cigarettes—no longer cheap, alas, in Sydney—are fashionable and popular. I could even order iced tea or iced coffee without being thought mildly insane. In short, Sydney is something of a Yankee with a Cockney accent. And I do not know that our influence has improved it.

On leaving America, I had set my destination flexibly as Port Moresby, Papua. But two things changed my course. Among the acquaintances made in Sydney were three islanders who were waiting for the steamer for Rabaul, the administrative center of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, known before the post-war division of German colonies as the Bismarck Archipelago and Kaiser Wilhelm Land; and be it noted that New Guinea is the name of the world's largest island (part of which is Dutch territory and part British) and is also the name of Britain's part of the island plus a great many small islands considered as an administrative unit. One of the three acquaintances was spoken of in the islands as a "liklik" doctor—one who, though not a medical graduate, knows a good deal about tropical diseases and is employed by the Government to care medically for the natives. (However, he later gave up the practice for the pursuit of gold at Edie Creek, with considerably more success all around.)

The other two were women, both young and good-looking. One of these, Dian, became the best friend I ever hope to have. The other was Mrs. Booth, known in the islands as "the Angel of Bulolo" because of the heroism with which she fought an epidemic that swept a district in the hinter-

land of New Guinea, whither she had accompanied her husband in search of gold. To those who knew her well she was "Puck," a name that suited her immeasurably better than "Angel." I met these three at my hotel, and afterward the balance lay heavily on the side of Rabaul. Furthermore, I had missed the *Morimla*, which had just sailed for Papua, and would have to wait six weeks before she returned, while the *Marsina* was due to sail for Rabaul and other ports of the Mandated Territory in a few days. That settled it. I booked the last cabin on the *Marsina*.

Three days before sailing I learned that I could not enter the Mandated Territory without a special permit from Canberra, Australia's capital, and from the administrator at Rabaul. Of these three days, Sunday and Monday were holidays—King's Birthday, or something—which left the day before sailing and the morning of sailing. As it turned out, the lack of time probably got me through. I explained to the gentlemen at the customs office that I had already bought my ticket on the *Marsina*, that I was a stranger in Australia, entirely alone, and had not known that special permission was needed to get into New Guinea, and that there was only a day and a half left. So cables began to dance between Canberra, Rabaul, and Sydney. The customs officer told me not to worry. (I had many weeks ago forgotten how to.) But he insisted that I leave my passport with him, despite my protests.

The following morning at ten-thirty, in a taxi with a duffle-bag, a box, a hat-bag, a suitcase, a portable typewriter, two cameras, and J. B. T., I stopped at the customs house and picked up my passport, which granted me permission to enter and remain in the Territory of New Guinea for the space of one year. At twelve the *Marsina* sailed.

I got rather a shock at seeing the ship that was to carry a hundred people through reef-infested waters. Most of her was obscured below the wharf, though she boasted two decks and a bridge. To board her you walked down a steeply inclined gangplank. An extremely narrow deck welcomed you, and from it you entered into the social saloon, a tiny cabin big enough for two tables and an antiquated upright piano, with settees built around the walls. Below deck, in most unsufferable heat from galley and engine-room, were the dining-saloon, staterooms, and two bathrooms. I was in luck; I drew one of the six infinitesimal deck cabins on top, where, though I got the hot breath of the galley funnels in nauseating whiffs, I enjoyed also whatever fresh trade-winds might be about.

I missed J. B. T. sorely for many days. As he himself once said, the worst of peripatetic lives is that the contacts one makes are so ephemeral. A few days, at best a few weeks, of pleasure together, and then a casual good-by, almost certainly forever. He should know, incorrigible wanderer that he is. We waved good-by as long as we could see each other.

I confess to a slight indisposition due to the buoyant playfulness of the *Marsina* during my first twenty-four hours aboard her. While languishing entirely *hors de combat*, I inquired of the stewardess whether this wasn't the worst ship in the Pacific. "No," she said grimly, "there's *one* worse." There was—the *Maitava*.

The hundred passengers packed the little ship literally to overflowing. Pajama-clad figures slept on the settees of both dining-saloon and social hall as well as on the decks. Two of the women on board were round-trippers, who in a misguided moment had chosen a vacation cruise on the

Marsina out to the romantic, sun-kissed South Pacific. They got precious little comfort or rest. Others were wives of government officials or planters, returning from furlough "down south," meaning Australia. I was the only American.

As for the men, the majority were bound for the gold fields of Edie Creek and Salamaua, in the mountains of the New Guinea mainland. A number were government servants and clerks—*clarks*, say the Orstrylians. Others were plantation owners or managers on their way to New Britain, New Ireland, the Admiralty Islands, or the Solomons.

There was one little chap called "Fritz," who was going to the out-station of Kaewieng, New Ireland, to open up a branch of the Commonwealth Bank, and who, for some unknown reason, carried a large bag of very bright golf clubs as part of his equipment. There was an Australian missionary returning to the central mission station at Rabaul. He wore shabby black clerics, and the skin on his face and hands was loose and yellow from many years of malaria. He was not very popular. Also, there were remittance-men, feckless and down-at-heels, paid to keep away from respectable British portals, who had drifted out to the South Pacific in search of fortune or adventure.

Then, there was the couple that we called the Wicked Uncle and the Babe in the Wood. He was a Scotch-Australian, and despite his graying hair there remained about him still the air of a cheap sport, something indefinably shyster and smooth. He alluded to his companion much more frequently and emphatically than necessary as "my niece." She herself had once been a blond trinket of a girl—perhaps even pretty. But years and life had taken pitiful toll of her looks and her spirit. The Wicked Uncle was a mine promoter, making his first trip to the gold fields. He held

the woman completely cowed by his lash of mental cruelty, by insults steeped in honey. Perhaps she loved him, perhaps she clung to him in terror lest he throw her back on a merciless world. Her figure was queer, her hair was bleached and quickly straightened unbecomingly in the damp air, and she seemed to be trying to conceal the fear that was growing in her eyes. We wanted to beat the Wicked Uncle to jelly, but after all he and his niece were not our affair.

§

Early one morning, eight days out of Sydney, when the light of the waning moon high overhead drenched everything in silver, we came upon the little island of Samarai. Its beauty was unearthly in the moonlight. A group of other and tinier atolls of the Louisiades dotted the water about it, their pale white beaches running out toward reef and gently lapping sea. Palm trees leaned far over the shore. Under the moon, low grass huts cast still shadows. There was not a light, not even in the bungalows of Samarai snuggled against the hill in the center of the island. But in the harbor riding lights shone bravely from schooner masts, the red reflections stabbing deep into the quiet water. Gradually the false dawn lighted the horizon, and with it the breathless peace seemed reluctantly to lift from the atolls. Day brought its own flagrant beauty, but never again—never—have I recaptured the sense of mysterious loveliness that was mine upon first beholding Samarai.

With the dawn there came something that in the South Pacific passes for activity aboard the schooners. The riding lights were taken in; brown figures in red laplaps bestirred themselves on tiny decks. Figures appeared from within the grass huts along the beaches of the tiny islands. We could see

by the pantomime that our ship was the center of attraction.

Samarai is, even in broad daylight, a strangely beautiful outpost of the world, set in an emerald sea, and is an important concentrating station for copra, pearl-shell, bêche-de-mer, all the products of the South Pacific. It is a little island; you can walk completely around it in less than thirty minutes. A broad dirt road, gratefully shaded by casuarinas and flowering trees, follows down to the wharf, or bridge. There are two hotels, a half-dozen government buildings and stores, a mission station, a general post-office, and twenty-odd bungalows here at Samarai. The bungalows are low, red-roofed, clapboard buildings, exceedingly comfortable, snuggled against the hill that rises, curiously, in the center of this coral island.

As instinctively as homing pigeons, the *Marsina's* passengers made for the "house-drink." Native women, who are called marys, passed by us, their soft grass skirts swaying gently with every movement of the hips. As they walked the muscles of their half-naked bodies played visibly beneath their satin-smooth skin. More often than not the Louisiade women are tattooed from ankles to forehead with a delicate lacework pattern, and strings of bright shells fall over their breasts. Their bodies are beautiful, but frequently their faces, with the rotting, betel-reddened teeth, are shockingly ugly.

Native police-boys, straight and well-formed and very proud of their military bearing, patrol the streets of Samarai in a uniform consisting of a dark-blue, cumbersome, hot-looking, woolen laplap, girded by a broad leather belt into which is stuck a long knife or a revolver.

Samarai is a mosaic of gay color, set in the jade cloisonné of the sea. Recruited boys—"boy" here often meaning

"man"—in laplaps of bright calico or sateen wrapped tightly around their hips and extending to the knee, rivaled the giant hibiscus flowers in brilliance. Armlets, so tight that they seem to sink an inch into the flesh and to prevent all possibility of blood circulation, are bedecked with flaming flowers, as is also the fuzzy wool. Ear-lobes are extended to the shoulder, and behind each ear is jauntily stuck another hibiscus blossom. Sunk into the mop of grass (pidgin for hair) is a carved and highly colored comb, with teeth seven inches long. Bands of bright seeds or imported beads encircle throats.

Natives reclined in the sun, running combs through their mops of grass. We came suddenly on a boy who was sitting patiently still while another squatted over him diligently hunting through his wool. They were like a pair of monkeys.

Back at the bridge I saw a strange and pitiful sight—the wildest creature I have ever laid my eyes on, a tall, thin, unbroken savage, clad in merely the briefest of filthy loin-cloths and carrying in his hands a bow and arrow. He seemed utterly bewildered by the activity of this tiny settlement. I



leveled my camera. He saw me and with a cry bolted into one of the copra sheds near by; nor could he be coaxed or commanded out. He was a fresh labor recruit from the hinterland of Papua, who had been persuaded by a few beads, a knife, and perhaps a fragment of mirror to sign himself away ("make paper") for a term of two years as a plantation laborer. And he was terrified and perhaps homesick, a wild animal out of his natural habitat.

Not far from Samarai lies the little coral island of Sudest, which has been ruled like a tiny empire for more than thirty years by a white woman, Mrs. Maloney. Forty years ago there was a great gold rush to Papua, and among the prospectors out of Ireland went Mr. and Mrs. Maloney and a partner. The gold rush petered out, and at length the Maloneys and their partner were virtually alone on the island of Sudest. At last the partner sold out his claim to them, and returned to Ireland to enjoy the fruits of his labors. Shortly after this Maloney died. This left his widow and several children in command of a South Pacific island, with close to fifteen hundred Stone-Age natives to handle.

Mrs. Maloney carried on. Her natives still brought her gold dust at odd intervals; she bought and sold copra and bêche-de-mer; she navigated her own schooners; she ruled her empire with an iron but understanding hand, and without interference from the Government. No missionary ever tried his hand at converting Sudest kanakas. Her children grew up healthy and intelligent, and when the time came they exchanged their mother's tutoring for higher academic education in Australia.

She is an old lady now, if still alive. She had abdicated in favor of one of her sons. But Sudest is still a monarchy within the Government. Mrs. Maloney, when last I heard of her, was living quietly and uneventfully with a daughter in Sydney. What a woman!

By noontime Samarai was insufferably hot. At length, from the bridge of the *Marsina*, I watched Jazz Williams,



the skipper, navigate us through myriad islands and reefs that would have ripped our ship to pieces had we struck one of them. The sea was ultramarine, shading to mauve and then to jade where a reef rose close to the surface, becoming pale-green near the beach and then cream-colored where the water foamed over jagged coral. The water was a garden of sea anemones. And I was caught up only with the beauty of it all—too new yet to everything here to get any glimpse of the death's-head behind the rainbow veil. No account of the atolls and sea and sky of the South Pacific can ever do justice to their physical beauty.

As for me, I was daft with freedom. All that mattered was that the earth was superlatively beautiful, I was alone, care-free, and footloose, on a high adventure with the world before me.

Two days later we steamed along Blanche Bay, with New Britain's brooding mountains looking down upon us, into the volcano-guarded harbor of Rabaul. Here, for me, the strange life in the South Pacific began, and for nothing in the world would I exchange the year that followed.



IV

CROSS-ROADS OF ADVENTURE

SOUTH of the equator and north of Australia, in that remote part of the world known vaguely as Melanesia, lies New Guinea. The world at large hasn't taken much notice of this place. If it thinks of it at all, it is probably as the place where head-hunters live and missionaries perhaps do not. Before the World War the large archipelago belonged to Germany, and was known as the Bismarck Archipelago and Kaiser Wilhelm Land. Post-war redistribution of territory has given these erstwhile German colonies over to Australia to govern, and they have been renamed unimaginatively the "Mandated Territory of New Guinea."

At the cross-roads of New Guinea lies Rabaul, the territorial capital. It is a most beautiful, rather reprehensible little port lying four degrees south of the equator. Here live about three hundred white souls (thirty-five of them women) and perhaps an equal number of Chinese and Malays. Many times outnumbering white masters and Celestials are the natives, flamboyant and half-naked, for the most part happy, as all are happy who have not tasted of knowledge.

Here in occidental Rabaul is a polyglot handful of humanity, made up of adventurers, seekers of oblivion, failures in the world of alert competition, expatriates of many

nations. Some are good, some bad; and most are entirely out of tune with the world at large. Here few prohibitions or inhibitions exist.

Rabaul itself is a wanton, exotic beauty fallen upon evil days—a wanton with crimson flowers in her hair and tawny skin and passionate languorous eyes. All men who touch at her shores are her lovers. Most often the price of lingering with her is their manhood. And, when she is done with them, there is no place else in all the world for them.

Of course I did not see all this as I leaned on the rail of the *Marsina* while we moved slowly along the New Britain coast. What I did see as we rounded Gazelle Peninsula into Blanche Bay and steamed up the shore-line fringed with plantations and jungles was a lovely landlocked harbor guarded by a volcano, with a forbidding background of mountain ranges. In its shadow lay schooners and one or two old five hundred ton steamers that tramp around collecting copra and pearl-shell. They reeked of bêche-de-mer and copra. They are familiar with the islands from Samarai to the Tasmans. Native outriggers wove in and out.

I leaned on my elbows, happily taking everything in. The returning D.O. (District Officer) at my side viewed the lovely scene dispassionately as he lighted a cigarette. "They call the volcano 'The Mother,'" he volunteered. Then he nodded at the low-lying flat island in mid-channel. "That's Vulcan Island; it rose from the sea bottom during the last great eruption." Further on toward the wharf, also blocking the entrance, reared two great coral rocks, The Bee Hives, all that remained of an island submerged in the same blow-off. "Scientists warn," continued the D.O., "that another eruption of The Mother is about due."

But she has been good for so many years that Rabaul

hardly gives a thought to danger. So life moves on unconcernedly within her shadow, except once in a while when the air is sultry and there comes a rumble as of charging thunder and the earth rocks for a few seconds like a schooner in a monsoon. But these are quickly over, and Rabaulites return to the house-drink and explain to uneasy newcomers that it is good that The Mother blows off in these little gourias, which act as a safety valve.

It was still early morning when we pulled alongside the bridge at Malaguna wharf; not yet nine o'clock, but already the seasoned islanders were drenched in perspiration and only the foolhardy went without hats or helmets. No one who has not lived the cut-off existence of tropic stations can appreciate what Boat Day means in the routine of life out there. Men in white helmets and white ducks waited in carnival mood. Women, shaded by great Japanese parasols, watched eagerly for some returning figure. Everywhere swarmed chocolate-colored natives, clothed solely in gay red laplaps, crimson hibiscus flowers in their wooly hair or stuck behind their ears—an irrepressibly noisy crowd. Native girls and women, also in laplaps, with the wretched addition of gaudy, loose blouses covering the upper part of their bodies, stood back of the crowd giggling together. The minute the ship was made fast, plank runways were laid from hold to wharf and a steady stream of shouting, laughing kanakas began unloading cargo. For even there time is precious to steamship companies.

Rabaul boasts three hotels. One is "European," the others are in Chinatown. The European Hotel is set far back from the road on Casuarina Avenue, a great bungalow affair, built on the prescribed six-foot piles, with overhanging eaves, lattices sheltering the large veranda, and punkas waving lazily

overhead. But there was no room for me at the hotel; planters, government employees, and gold-rushers to and from Salamaua and Edie Creek filled it to twice its capacity.

This sent me, not at all unwillingly, to Ah Chee's great barn of a hotel at the corner of Chinatown. And it was just as well; for, though the European Hotel is more elegant than Chinatown, occasionally the nights are disturbed there by over-indulgent gentlemen going into D.T.'s. This happened only once within my experience at my hotel. It's a good hotel, Ah Chee's. It sits at the cross-roads where Chinatown and white Rabaul meet. You enter a great double doorway, twenty feet high, direct from the road, into a cement-floored hall. A bar greets you on your right, and swinging half-doors on your left open into a large dining-room. On the walls hang framed lithographs advertising German beer and two or three beautiful engravings of classic paintings—beauty mixed indiscriminately with the shoddiness that is to be found all over the islands. A wide stairway winds to the bare, clean sleeping rooms above, where each room opens out on a gallery veranda. After weeks on ships, I looked gratefully about me at my large room. Its meager furnishings included a bed enveloped in a voluminous mosquito net, a wash-stand, two chairs, and a huge Teutonic wardrobe. This last was firmly hooked to the three-quarter-high wall, so that it wouldn't tumble over on the bed during an earthquake.

It is curious what knocking around the world a bit will do to your high-flown sense of values. Gradually, for weeks, I had been deleting from my life things that I had once considered essentials.

I think the prime affectation of civilization is a well-equipped bathroom. There in Rabaul I had to revise my notions of the bath entirely. In New Guinea, to begin with, it is

no longer a bathroom, but a house-washwash. At Ah Chee's this was situated some little distance around a hallway from my room. It was a roughly boarded enclosure, its cemented floor sloping toward a drain in the middle. Overhead, suspended from a rope like a gibbet, hung a large galvanized can with holes punched in the bottom. This was cunningly arranged so that when it was filled with water and you stood under it, your pull on a dangling end of rope released a trickle of water. It takes a certain amount of virtuosity successfully to soap and then rinse. Pull on the rope, trickle of water; slack on the rope, water stops. And, believe it or not, I was grateful for this shower-bath. It was a luxury to wake up in the morning, sing out "Boy," hear him answer spryly "Yessah," and then merely say to him, "Put 'im washwash-on-top"; for the command "washwash" alone would have brought forth but a basin of water. The nice distinctions of pidgin English are most important.

You must have your own personal servant in Rabaul, even at the hotel; otherwise you will fare badly. And boys are hard to get, while to get a maly is almost impossible. Luck stalked me; one of the German boarders, observing my servantless plight for a few days, gave me two of his own boys. They slept outside my doors, killed stray cockroaches within my domain, made my room spotless, and kept my clothes washed and ironed. To be sure, I promptly caught kuskus (ringworm) from one of them, but brown salve quickly cured that.

At Ah Chee's my fingers were on the very pulse of the South Pacific, for it is there that the true islanders congregate. Also boarding there were half a dozen Germans, a small remnant of the empire-builders who had lost their land when the colony was given over to Australia to govern. I

liked them, and after they had ceased to mistrust me as a spy on their movements they were very kind to me. It is they who helped to wrest that beautiful and verdant place from the jungle. When they were beginning to reap the generous harvest of their superhuman efforts, the upset of the war came. Those who are yet holding on are doubtless hoping for fuller restitution as time goes by. Some of them have found gold in New Guinea; others are engaged in trading. Some, by grace of Australian wives, have resisted expropriation and are cultivating their cocoanut plantations. One or two know the bitterness of being employed on the plantations that used to be their own, and into which they had poured precious years of their lives and their hopes. Well aware of the precariousness of their position under the Australian mandate, they show no outward sign of animosity toward existing conditions. They are a powerful factor still in New Guinea, these Germans. Theirs is the knowledge both of the country and of colonizing without which Australia is seriously handicapped in its administrative task.

Unfortunately, Australia lacks the necessary funds to carry on the building up of New Guinea. The islands, once the pride of the German colonists, are degenerating tragically. The beautiful road, stretching for many miles up into the mountains in New Britain, is all but impassable in places, while the tributary roads once connecting flourishing hinterland plantations have been reclaimed long since by the jungle.

Australia has practically made the Territory over to her war veterans. The expropriated plantations are being sold by the Commonwealth on a time-payment basis to men who hardly know a palm tree from a pine. These men are obviously more interested in the personal freedom possible in the

islands than in cultivating the magnificent resources of New Guinea. Most of them are total failures out there; their plantations revert to the great trading companies which are financing them, and they themselves wander on to the uncertain fortunes of the gold fields, or return, worse-off than ever, to Australia.

Oddly enough, the natives seem to have preferred the iron rule of the Germans to the more lenient one of the Australians. The new Government forbids a white man to strike a native, no matter what the offense. The penalty is a heavy fine or imprisonment, or both. Unfortunately, there are only two things that a kanaka dreads in the way of punishment; one is physical pain, the other humiliation before his kind. The old German paddle system inflicted both at once, with no material harm to the offending native. Now, particularly in the outlying stations where official justice would be long in coming, and where a white man must deal swiftly with misdemeanors, it has been discovered that a length of rubber hose inflicts effective, harmless chastisement, but leaves no telltale marks.

In addition to the Germans at Ah Chee's, there were transients—recruiters, gold prospectors, occasional skippers of schooners, and a Chinese merchant with his little slant-eyed son. There was also Yank Colvin from Kentucky, the only other American in Rabaul at the time I arrived. He was tall, thin, weather-beaten, his shrewd eyes and nasal drawl more suggestive of New England than of the genial South. At his heels always trailed a nondescript black dog with eyes full of unfathomable love for her master.

Yank introduced himself to me one day as we met along the dusty road leading to Chinatown. He had been in New Guinea several years prospecting for gold, but was now on

the trail of diamonds. At the moment and rather profanely, he was cooling his heels in Rabaul, awaiting his trial for having threatened natives. It had happened that, in the remote hinterland of New Guinea mainland, another white man became ill with black-water fever. There was only one thing to do—get him to the coast. So the Kentuckian started back through the heartbreaking jungle with carriers bearing the sick man. It was hostile country, and the natives mutinied. Yank drove them at the point of his revolver; they made the coast and the sick Australian lived. But the carriers complained that he had threatened them, and he was brought back to Rabaul for trial. At the time I met him, he would gladly have cut the throats of all Australians—even the one he had saved. His trial dragged on for three months. He was acquitted.

Living at Ah Chee's, I had Chinatown at my elbow; Chinatown that perforce borders upon occidental Rabaul, but mingles with it no more than does the green Gulf Stream with the muddy waters of the Mississippi. The excitable sing-song of Cantonese was in my ears from the road beneath my balcony; gramophones around the corner shrieked Chinese music that sounded like a soul in travail; figures in loose black silk pajamas wove back and forth, their queues reaching to their knees. But interspersed with these older Celestials are those of the younger generation in starched white ducks and spotless shirts, heads shorn and crowned with a white helmet or a fine Panama. The Chinese are prosperous in Rabaul, and these young bloods often ride in expensive American motor-cars.

Here, again, the lighter hand of the new rulers of the islands is apparent.

Time was when a Chinese stepped aside as a white man

passed; now they rub elbows. Komini, the Japanese trader, who owns many plantations and schooners, takes part in social affairs at Government House, and his little wife, robed in a heavy silk kimono, her oiled black hair sleekly gathered into a high pompadour, sits bolt upright on a settee and receives with inscrutable composure the gallantry of slightly inebriated gentlemen.

At night the shop windows of Chinatown are dark and somewhat sinister, unless the white moonlight throws their wares into wan relief; but by day the narrow windows display, indiscriminately, lovely brocaded silks, jade figurines, carved ivories, brass bowls, cloisonné, fans, together with the worthless trumpery and colored powders that the kanaka will sell his very soul to have.

In narrow doorways beside these shops squat Chinese, smoking curious pipes. Pretty, young little wives wait upon you from the dimness within—pretty, young little wives brought out of China on the *Calulu* as if purchased from a mail-order house. Sing Fat had sent back home for a wife, his former one having died in childbirth. But the girl ordered did not arrive. In her place came a deliciously lovely child, scarcely thirteen years old. Sing Fat was well on toward fifty, but he was not at all displeased with the substitution. Nor, apparently, was the girl; for her small heart-shaped face, over her neat, stiff, black collar and Chinese coat, was always smiling and content behind the dim counter. Sing Fat watched her like a cat; there were no queueless, starched young Nationalists in Panama hats loitering about his premises.

Through Chinatown all day long move also white men and women; for Ah Kuhn's store carries the best stock of merchandise in Rabaul—beautiful things from China and use-

ful things from Sydney. Ah Kuhn has made a considerable fortune in his years in Rabaul, and his son has been educated at Oxford. Ah Kuhn loves to show you his son's photograph, and to tell you how the boy is soon to be a lawyer.

Living in the midst of these strange people, I hugged to myself a precious sense of something possessed that I had all but missed. I write this passage from the shelter of a heavy-laden grape arbor overlooking an orchard where fruit is reddening. Far below me lies a rocky Massachusetts coast, from which a blue, blue August sea stretches out beyond the horizon, eventually to a sea-track leading to sun-drenched coral islands as unaware of this place as the surrounding New Englanders are of Rabaul. There are schooners dotting the sea here, too, but they are spruce, well-painted craft, not happy-go-lucky schooners that pick precariously among green reefs, over enchanted sea-gardens, to anchor in still lagoons where lie pearl-shell and *bêche-de-mer*. Somehow my imagination will not permit me to substitute for the New England fisherman crew another crew with half-naked dark bodies, heads aflame with a dyed halo of wool, ugly faces splotted with betel-red. But the blue sea and the schooners bring back a great wistfulness for that other sea and those other little craft, reeking of copra, that have carried me from atoll to atoll. And yet this is a good place . . . a much better place than New Guinea . . . and beautiful, and I am perverse not to be content with it.

But Chinatown does not make up the quarter part of this remarkable South Pacific metropolis. Rabaul is cradled in a hollow facing the sea. Everywhere is gay color. The jade and blue of the water fade into a blue horizon. Golden cassias, dropping petals, turn earthy walks into paths of gold. Poincianas blaze along the roadside. Purple bougainvillea

climbs everywhere. Eugenias flower in rose glory. Pale champak blossoms drift their petals, loved of pale Indian brides. Great crimson and yellow hibiscus flowers hang heavy heads from tall bushes. Everywhere that gold-and-white treasure of the South Pacific, frangipani, sends sweetness down the ways. Trees spill fountains of white orchids. Yellow fruit clusters about the heads of slender papaw trees. Rain-trees drip moisture and lend grateful coolness during the day. Comfortable white bungalows, red-roofed, built on six-foot piles, are hedged in behind shrubbery.

Surely Rabaul was laid out lovingly by the Germans who planned it. Casuarina Avenue, very wide and lined with the great trees that give it its name, stretches the length of the metropolis, through Chinatown, and ends at the Botanic Gardens. Along this road passes all of Rabaul, like some exotic pantomime.

I traversed Casuarina Avenue several times a day. Of all colorful things in these islands, except the paradise birds and butterflies, the native is the brightest. The male natives of New Britain, and occasionally the marys, dye their hair. After the first amazement, you become accustomed to heads crowned with a mop of cardinal red, green, saffron, blue, or purple wool. Sometimes it is a combination of two colors which flaunts itself with superiority above the sober pates of out-islanders. Periodically the brilliant coloring is replaced by white or saffron-yellow, due to the use of disinfecting lime. New Britain boys not only color their grass, but they circle one eye with crimson.

In New Guinea, different from our own workaday world, it is the male creature who is gorgeous, rather than the female. A mary may not wear flowers in her hair—not a virtuous mary—but the man God gave her tucks flaming

hibiscus flowers behind each ear and in his tight armlets. His teeth are as black as polished ebony, or they are colored crimson with betel-dye. A tall wooden comb, carved and painted, is stuck into his grass, and the latter is further bedecked with wisps of feathers—goura, paradise, osprey, parrot, or even common rooster plumage. From babyhood, ear-lobes are trained to hang in long, dangling rims, eventually to the shoulders. The lobe is early pierced and a small ring of wood inserted. As the ear grows, larger and larger disks replace it.

In white communities of the Mandated Territory marys may not wear the native grass skirt, nor go with breasts bare. Calico laplaps are substituted for the beautiful, swaying grass pulpuls, and ugly blouses cover the brown shoulders and breasts. In her bush village a native woman remains a lithe, natural creature; she walks with a swinging movement of her hips that sways her grass pulpul with irresistible grace; and under the brown, satiny skin every muscle of her back is visibly in play. But in the white town community, put into calico laplap and blouse, she looks just a lazy, sloppy wench.

Not at all uncommon along Casuarina Avenue is a parade of half a dozen police-boys, in tightly wrapped blue flannel laplaps, white sailor hats atop their wool, bearing a litter. The litter is covered with a piece of tarpaulin, but one motionless brown foot protrudes. It is a "deader," bound for burial in the native cemetery. This is not a serious event in the native philosophy—except, perhaps, for the one on the litter. Life is held very lightly in New Guinea.

Directly opposite Ah Chee's stands a weather-beaten frame building wherein twice a week are displayed ancient American movies. If one or two reels are missing or disabled, the half-caste operator substitutes the equivalent in handy, if irrelevant, film.

The Governor is a small round man. He has a good job, and knows it. It carries with it much more prestige than even a very prosperous business in Queensland. Still, he must sometimes reflect wistfully on the times when he was his own master, when he was not pulled in opposite directions by the missionaries and the political powers down in Canberra. Public functions are singularly Gilbert-and-Sullivan-esque (usually held in the European Hotel). Suddenly, in the midst of festivities, the orchestra bursts into a fanfare of "God Save the King!" and a round little man in a stiff white mess-jacket and wearing a distinguished gray imperial, mounts the steps followed by a correspondingly round and florid little woman resplendent in strings of Sydney jewelry and sequin-studded gown. His Excellency and his Excellency's wife thus make their resounding splash in the puddle of Melanesia.



V

GOLD!

AMONG the ever-passing inhabitants along Casuarina Avenue are half a dozen full-blooded Samoan women, wives or widows of German planters who more than a quarter of a century ago brought these women out to New Guinea. They are all related to one of New Guinea's famous characters, Queen Emma, and are of royal Samoan blood. They are aging now, and their figures have lost the smooth curves of their glorious youth. They carry themselves regally; the passion that burns fiercely in women of their race still smolders within their great, dark eyes . . . still has power to excite men who cross their paths.

These women continue to be an important influence in New Guinea. Beside their husbands, they have fought the jungle and reared great plantations out of virgin wilderness. Unafraid, they have tamed savages and held them in subjection; unflinchingly they have faced childbirth in the wilderness. With the new administration hard times have come;

but they are carrying on with the remains of their lands, helped by their sons, hoping grimly that restitution will yet be made.

One of the most famous characters that ever touched Rabaul was Queen Emma. She came to New Britain years ago, during the rule of the German New Guinea Company, which was to New Guinea for a long time what the British East India Company was to the British colonies. She was the wife of a German planter, but was early left a widow. A splendid pioneer, she became a veritable queen in New Britain, her indomitable will and personality conquering and holding the respect and obedience of hundreds of savages. With tobacco and calico she negotiated with neighboring chiefs for huge tracts of land. Her plantations and trading activities brought her a vast fortune. Her beautiful house, empty now, lies out at Kokopo, fifteen miles from Rabaul. During her heyday, when her entertainments were as royal as the isolated island permitted, a scarlet carpet stretched from the drive into the house for her guests to walk upon. The house itself was supplied with expensive furniture imported from Germany, and was a priceless museum of paradise pelts and native curios.

She was a gloriously beautiful woman then, and fully conscious of her power. She took a second husband, was again widowed, and then accepted a third, an Australian. She was no longer young by this time, her beauty was fading. After the war was over she carried this new young husband abroad with her; also a favorite young maid as her personal servant. They set out for Europe, to see the world. They lingered at various capitals. They were a strange trio wandering through the continent—a young, dissipated Australian, an elderly Samoan wife, and a savage girl.

At length they reached Monte Carlo. The husband was a

ne'er-do-well squanderer, and was profligate with his wife's money. She, in turn, knew well the ways of Pacific island life, but little of European sophistication. Monte Carlo didn't help matters, and by this time she was desperately unhappy. She adored her young husband, but he had no unselfish interest in her; his love was dead, if it had ever existed, and her beauty was quite gone. His infidelities were many and protracted. So, one day, she shot him, and a few minutes later committed suicide.

But pity most the poor half-breed children of these Aryan-Samoan alliances. There are a number of them in the islands—beautiful, amoral, wilful, wretched. They seem to inherit few of the good traits of either parent. Educated among whites in Germany or Australia, they are aware of their half-white blood. Their oblivion lies in alcohol, and it is when they are drunk that the unrestrained “kanaka-true” stands forth.

One of my reasons for wandering out to the South Pacific was to escape monotony. But there the deadliest monotony in the world exists. The South Pacific is no place for a white woman to live—not indefinitely. Too many servants do away with the interest of housekeeping. The enervating climate quickly discourages exercise of mind or body. There is the usual amount of erotic intrigue which is a part and parcel of every tropical settlement, too insincere to have any relationship with love. But the curse of the white population is gossip. A newcomer soon learns, after weathering the first sense of outrage, to accept even libel with weary indifference.

There, if anywhere, social ambitions would seem to have no place. In the old days the Germans did not permit white women in the islands; wise, that was, from any point of view. To-day women have brought with them in miniature all the inanities of social ambitions and social barriers that civiliza-

tion has ever concocted. In Rabaul, a cannibal island, a "clark's" wife is not invited to tea with an executive's wife, who is herself on but a nodding acquaintance with the "administration crowd," and the Governor's wife, high on Namanula Hill, "speaks only to God."

§

And then there is the New Guinea Memory. I first heard of it long before I entered the islands; from Dian, down in Sydney. There, a half-dozen islanders had amused themselves by recounting the evils that would probably befall me out in the archipelago. I treated the forecast lightly, though there wasn't one of the half-dozen that hadn't paid toll to the tropics. Now, as the weeks of my life in the islands passed, it began to seem that none of the major afflictions were to befall me. Though I took no large quantities of quinine, I felt no fever. Coral was a very present danger if one swam; danger from a scratch of it might cost a limb, or even life. Organisms might get into one's ear and cause excruciating suffering.

But I gradually came to believe in the New Guinea Memory. All day the throb of tom-toms beats into one's brain, all night through one's sleep one never knows the peace of complete silence. All this insinuating, unobtrusive distant rhythm lulls something that was once active in one's brain. What I had first thought to be a fantastic fiction descended so imperceptibly that I scarcely realized the veil. Gradually I too fell into the illusion that here in these sun-beaten, fragrant days and soft nights only the present was real. If the future held problems, maskee! Maskee is an island word meaning, "It makes no difference." The past became gradually dream-like. I found that energy was wasted, since no one else pos-

sessed it. The days when I had been an ambitious worker receded into a remote limbo of life. Letters from home, for the time of their perusal, were a sharp counter-active. I received them gratefully and looked forward to them in the long intervals between mails. But they finally came like news from another planet, bringing the people and associations mentioned in them into brief and sharp relief. I found myself groping for a thought or a name that vanished as I was about to utter it. Out there, where little news of the world seeps in, and can be of little personal importance, how can the rest of the world matter much?

For some time, after returning from New Guinea, I wasn't aware of the full havoc of the New Guinea Memory. For a while after my return I was still living in the islands. I could not remember things as I should, and *must* if I were later to survive in New York. I have jerked myself out of it now, but I have occasionally felt as I might if after a paralysis I were teaching myself all over again how to walk.

§

We arrived there on a Friday. On Monday I had been offered a job, accepted it, and started in to work. It was offered to me at the Boat-Night dance at the European Hotel—wages \$125 a month. I was to punch a typewriter and make myself useful generally at the headquarters of one of the copra trading firms in Rabaul. It was invaluable, that experience.

Primarily, I was saving money instead of spending it. Furthermore, I lost the stigma of being merely a looker-on. Schooners and rickety steamers came and went among the islands between New Britain and the equator, and their skip-

pers and supercargoes stopped in to deliver reports and yarn a bit. Many of them became my friends; from them I got my bearings and decided what places I wanted to strike out for when I should leave Rabaul.

Business in the South Pacific! Rabaul is a museum of the most haphazard business methods extant. Except for executives, the longest a clerk had been known to stick at his desk was six months. Salaries are not big enough to attract the best men, and in consequence business is in the hands of the restless floating population that passes through, generally on the way to the gold fields.

Books get into a hopeless tangle, and the man in charge of them throws up the job, leaving it to the next in line to straighten them out. Things go wrong. Maskee! The men go to the house-drink around the corner and drown the thought. We had amusing little monkeys (half-grown native boys) for office-boys, a half-dozen of them. Their chief duties were to pick up whatever we might drop, trot obligingly back and forth with letters to be signed, and fetch us icewater when we sang out, "Monkey! Ketch 'im drink along me along bokis ice!" During the humid afternoons, all six of them would sit on the bench outside the office sound asleep, their mouths open, their woolly heads comically trimmed with feathers or flowers. They slept like logs, impervious to a sharp "Monkey!" from any one of us. But they would respond quickly and good-naturedly to the impact of a wad of paper hurled at them.

The return to Chinatown after a day's flexible routine of so-called business was invariably a lively treat. For Nicki would be waiting there. Nicki was an adventurer, nomad, strange composite of irresponsibility and strength, of bad and

good, an intellectual bearing the mark of an ancient and alien god on his soul. Rare comrades, Nicki and I, for many weeks, seeing all things eye to eye, finding an answering sympathy each of us in the other. He had long since penetrated beneath the languid surface to the unsound core of these islands, but he found them a better place to live than post-war Europe.

He too had chosen Chinatown to live in. It was dirty, it was noisy, it was restless, it was no doubt reprehensible. Still, I loved to watch it from my gallery at the brief dusk. Then, quieted temporarily, Chinatown turns indoors for its evening rice, and the strident gramophones stop for a while. From the hills comes steadily the throbbing rhythm of native drums. That beating—a swift and flawless system of wireless—becomes as much a part of existence as breath itself. The thin white curls of signal-smoke in the hills give place to a red glow, like eyes ever trained on the handful of white invaders. With the benison of night comes the trade-breeze, banishing heat, restoring energy. Night is lovely in Rabaul.

Adding to the fascination of this strange, not very virtuous little Rabaul, is the undercurrent of excitement raised by the magic word Gold. For up in the hills of New Guinea mainland, behind Salamaua, up at Edie Creek, and in the Bulolo Valley, gold has been found. The mountains are guarding their secret jealously, but nature is not entirely ungracious, for here, too, in generous quantities, is reef and alluvial gold. And men are breaking their hearts, and their lives, and their youth in search of it.

A few great fortunes have already been made; many prospectors have made earth and river-bed yield enough to pay for the adventure of hunting it; but many more have suf-

fered the bitterness of disappointment. There is reason to believe that in the mountains of New Guinea lie great gold deposits.

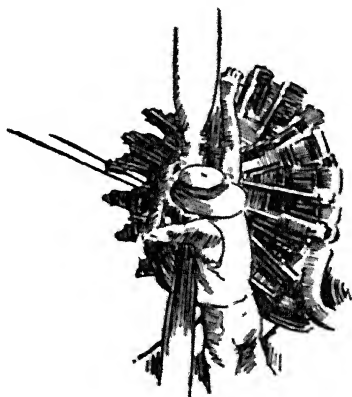
Men of all strata of society, of all degrees of education, have been flocking to Salamaua Beach by schooner, or by the crazy little steamer *John Douglas*, which, alas, came a cropper in a monsoon not long ago. Unspeakable hardships face the gold-hunter at Edie Creek and Salamaua and Bulolo Valley—unbroken jungle, continuous rain, knee-deep mud, fever, hostile natives, and the savagery of other white men in conditions where the code is every man for himself and devil take the hindmost.

The great problems are the extracting of the precious ore and the getting of it back to safety and to a place where it has market value. It seems almost impossible to transport adequate machinery up into those purple tiers of mountains. But slowly and surely man is triumphing. The airplane here, as everywhere, is helping accomplish the impossible. Now the prospector, if he can afford it, takes one of the two planes operating from Salamaua Beach to within six days' jungle walk of the nearest known field.

This little airplane route up to the New Guinea gold fields is one of the first self-supporting, unsubsidized airplane routes in the world. For a while Ray Parer, the famous young Australian flier, piloted the plane. It was he who, with his co-pilot McIntosh, flew from England to Australia in 1920, long before the great transpacific flight of the *Southern Cross*. Out in New Guinea Ray Parer is a national hero, and his was one of the heroic flights of history, of which the world has heard too little.

After months in the gold fields, it is small wonder that

prospectors come down to Rabaul to blow off steam, to celebrate success or drown failure, and to make considerable stir in the community. Then champagne is ordered by the case, and opened just for the joy of hearing the corks pop—even if nobody can drink any more.





VI

RABAUl TINTYPES

IN RABAUl every white person has his story, usually the story of failure or despair in another part of the world. Moving among them, getting beneath the surface of their personalities and their histories, I grew to regard them with even more interest than I did the natives of the primitive world around me.

At Ah Chee's I discovered Old Craig. That's the only name any one knew him by, apparently. He was a remittance man, paid to keep away from his family. He's an old man now, and New Guinea has taken toll from him. Time was when he was a successful blackbirder, in the old days, and made plenty of money trading in pearl-shell as well as in kanakas. But he drank too much and lost something that makes for success the world over. At the first of every month he gets a remittance from "down south"; by the fifth of every month he hasn't a shilling left. He gets drunk, stays drunk, gambles in Chinatown until his monthly dole is gone. He is literally homeless, a pitiful old beach-comber. For a while he was sleeping on the veranda of Ah Chee's in a deck-chair.

One morning I went down to breakfast. No one else had

yet come down. In a few minutes Old Craig entered, fumbling his hat. He stood at the swinging half-doors of the dining-room, helplessly; then, seeing the room empty save for me, entered and slid into a chair at the other long table—slid in as a child does who doesn't want to be noticed. The kanaka servant brought my fruit and coffee. Seeing the old man, he began shooing him out. Helplessly, blearily, Old Craig got out of his chair and stood looking aimlessly about, fingers rumpling his battered Stetson, while the native kept on saying, "You go! No got kaikai 'long you!" I knew that he would get fed before the morning was over; Ah Chee never let a man who asked of him go hungry, so I didn't interfere. But my eyes saw what the South Pacific too often does to a white man.

There was a man who frequently upheld the bar at Ah Chee's, whose appearance, of all the nondescript personalities there, was the strangest. Peyton was a big Australian, soft with the flabby fatness that comes with too little exercise and too much beer. In one eye he wore a monocle from which dangled a black ribbon; the other eye was glass. His once-handsome face had been made over by plastic surgery, following a horrid accident of the war. His forehead was singularly high, due to a marvelously inserted silver trepan, but its unnatural height was somewhat counteracted by a bang of dark hair. Despite all this he was still handsome. He wore a disreputable old felt hat well back on his head, and his appearance clearly indicated that he didn't care much about anything, and was in the early stages of going native. When he was sober he had a Rabelaisian good humor, but when he was drunk he was noisily ornery.

Peyton managed a plantation out along the North Shore. He is one of several persons upon whom island gossip has

pinned the famous story of the glass eye. If a white man can work upon the natives' fear of the supernatural, he has a valuable hold on them. All plantation managers and recruiters know the value of sleight of hand, ventriloquism, conjuring, and the like. Removing a set of false teeth fills a kanaka with wonder and wholesome respect; it places the owner of the teeth on a plane with the gods.

Now, the monocled Peyton had a natural talent for whiling comfortable hours away on his veranda with a bottle of beer at his elbow and a boy to sway a punkah over his head. But he knew that plantation laborers will soldier on the job when not watched. It occurred to him one day that his glass eye might serve him well; so the next morning at bell-o (the assembling of native labor at sunrise, when each is detailed to a task for the day) he took his eye out, placed it on a box so that it apparently overlooked the plantation, and spoke somewhat as follows: "Now you looklook good along h'eye belong me. 'Im 'e looklook good along you olotime. S'pose me fella me sleep, h'eye belong me can looklook good along you olosame. Now s'pose you laze, me savvy. Now raus!"

It worked. He got a good vacation, and the boys labored earnestly. But after a week things weren't going so well. So one day he wandered down to his glass eye, and found it covered with an empty jam tin. Some canny kanaka had found a way to blind the all-seeing eye.

§

I don't make friends easily—not intimate friends. Not that I don't want to, or don't like people—but it is difficult. But I made some lasting friendships out there—three or four.

Dian was my very good, my well-loved friend. I trust she will always be; Dian within whose beautiful head reposed

more knowledge and intelligence than could be grasped by all the rest of the feminine population of the islands put together. Until now Dian's life has been all either zenith or nadir. After she had married her young Australian lieutenant, and when they had set out for his home in Australia, they had embarked on a career that sounds like fiction. For Gerry, the husband, developed bad lungs from war gas. They had little money, and what they had was devoted to Gerry's relief. But they had love and high courage.

Gerry knew somewhat of seafaring. Dian, among other things, was a qualified engineer. So they bought ~~them~~ a schooner and together set out from Sydney for New Guinea in search of fortune and Gerry's health. It took them three months to reach Rabaul, though the *Marsina* does it in ten days. For three years they carried freight, lifted copra from island plantations, chartered out their schooner and their services, gathered pearl-shell and bêche-de-mer, lived half in and half out of the green water.

They knew the sea-tracks from Moresby to the Solomons. Dian bossed the native crew and did the cooking herself. They made friends with the people who interested them (usually those déclassé among Rabaul's élite), and when the fancy took them they read together philosophies and a catholic assortment of literature, letting the world go by. When they were in Rabaul they lived in Chinatown. Gerry seemed better for a while. Dian, worshipping him, tried to build an impassable wall between his infirmity and death. Perhaps her love did carry him along—for he did not die of lung trouble after all.

Dian's and Gerry's social position in Rabaul was not so very high—not with the "four hundred." Namanula Hill did not open its doors to them, nor did the upper commercial

stratum. One cannot live half on a schooner in shorts and a jersey and half at a hotel in Chinatown, and hobnob with Rabaul's social register. Dian, at the time, didn't even notice that this was so. It was only long after, when married to a leading citizen of the Melanesian capital, that the doors opened wide, though she herself was still no more or less than the young erstwhile engineer of the *Sally Ann*.

They saved enough money to buy a copra plantation in the Solomons and did fairly well. Then Dian got black-water fever—that terrible scourge of New Guinea from which a victim so rarely recovers. But her superb health brought her through. Gerry was beside himself at the thought of losing her, and when she recovered they left the Solomons for a furlough in Australia. But in Sydney the fatal germ that had been incubating in his blood matured, and Gerry died a victim of black-water fever.

Dian is not one to quarrel with fate. She spent nearly all her money for white flowers for his grave; and something vital and young and passionate within herself kept his freed soul company. Gathering up the frayed strings of her life, she plunged into physical work, at first laboring like a farm-hand side by side with ranchers on an Australian station. She cooked, housekept, washed, tended sheep. But the call of New Guinea was upon her. Returning to Rabaul, she took a job there. She couldn't bear to go back to the Solomons plantation alone.

All men are in love with beautiful, brainy Dian—they can't help it. She married one of them; women like Dian are not meant to live alone, and, besides, there were too many memories to haunt her solitude. He is a good man, who adores her. Formerly a schoolmaster in Tasmania, he now conducts a thriving business in Rabaul. He married her knowing that

she would play fair with him, but that the great tenderness she had for the lovable, impetuous Gerry had gone west with him. I know that he can't forget the sealed corner in her heart into which no one else may enter. Dian still lives a secluded life, for the tiresome, libelous, unsatisfying social life of the tropics has as little interest for her now as it would have had when she helped sail the *Sally Ann* before the trades. Never until now has she experienced comparative affluence and security. I am not sure that either benison rests easily on her soul. Her eyes are sometimes wells of wistfulness.

One day Dian and I came across some photographs, one of which was of herself and the lad that died. He was tall and thin, not at all handsome, but with a smile that betrayed why he was so dear. And Dian was there, as lovely as a flower, with an expression that she has lost since. It was taken in the Solomons. Studying it for a moment, Dian said: "I look as if I had just been kissed on the back of my neck, don't I?" And doubtless she had.

§

The Germans at Ah Chee's were also my friends. It was not strange that they should not have trusted me at first. I was the only woman in the hotel, and I had come out of nowhere and for no apparent purpose. Women don't go to Rabaul just out of curiosity. No wandering woman such as I had ever before passed through there.

Theirs was a charmed circle on Ah Chee's gallery in the evening. The little Chinaman had screened off a corner of his gallery for his own private use, but these Teutons, who had been his friends for many years, were welcome to the freedom of his hotel. On the other hand, there is little that the Germans would not do for him.

After the war, when things looked so black for these men, it was Ah Chee who sheltered and fed many of them, trusting them to pay him back if they could, and glad to count it as a gift otherwise. He is forever sheltering some derelict, like Old Craig. But now that this group of Germans are beginning to get on their feet again, some because of successful gold claims, one or two by flourishing trading stations, they have paid him back many times over.

Socially the Germans of Rabaul are *déclassé*. I counted it a thrill to be one of their enchanted circle of an evening; for sometimes Nicki and I would join the lantern-lit corner of the gallery where half a dozen of them gathered over mugs of beer.

Among them was Marx. His soft brown eyes, which sometimes fill easily with tears, look as guileless as a child's. He is considered "dangerous" by the Government. There have been innumerable motions made to deport him, but he never fails to sidestep deportation. And now he is pretty safe, for he could never live outside of the tropics. There is no doubt that Marx pulls powerful strings in both Canberra and Germany.

He is an awful example of what the tropics will do to you if you don't watch out! Twenty-odd years ago when he arrived in New Britain he was a lean, well-proportioned, good-to-look-at young German. He grew round and rounder, all the while deploring his vanishing symmetry of form over huge steins of beer, his mild brown eyes becoming mournful over his plight. But his brain was always as keen as a steel trap. His plantations and trading stations prospered. He became a figure in the colony, physically and figuratively. Now he weighs well over three hundred pounds, and he is only of middle height. He cannot see his feet when he stands up.

It takes two native boys to dress him, for, try he ever so valiantly, he could never don his trousers or put on his shoes himself.

The war has made a considerable dent in his fortunes. His ostensible business is a trade-store in Chinatown, importing goods from Switzerland and Germany. His is the most untidy, most enchanting trade-store I have ever explored. It is housed in a dilapidated rough wooden building. Aside from the cheap trumpery to appeal to kanakas, his chief imports are choice wines and tinned delicacies. These last he imports in such large quantities that he cannot hope to sell half of them. What he does not sell he consumes himself. This, confidentially, is their reason for being there.

Marx used sometimes to invite me over to luncheon or dinner. I always went. Huge bales and wooden boxes filled with wines and tinned foodstuffs made walls around his rear courtyard, which otherwise was hemmed in by Chinese traders' shacks. Food would be brought, even in the pouring rain, from the house-cook (meaning cook-house of course) across this courtyard by a wild-haired Admiralty Islands native in a bright green laplap—delicate soup (frequently green turtle), *pâté de foie gras*, truffles, galantine of chicken, a tinned concoction of pork chops and some ineffable kind of sauce, and German sausage, to be sliced off as desired. And caviar, too, if I felt inclined. And an inexpressible kind of tinned plums of which I was most fond. And wines . . . still or sparkling Hoch, Burgundy, Rhine wine. Ah, dinner with Marx was a red-letter event!

I remember Marx as good-tempered and generous. But, dear me, his appetite! At the sight of a domestic animal roaming around—an appealing young goat, a piglet blissfully ignorant of the thought it was inspiring, an unsus-

pecting fowl—sometimes in contemplating the unoffending beast he would launch into a recipe of how it could best be cooked. It was a fascinating and horrifying proclivity of his.

§

But I must not forget Ah Chee. Sitting in the shadow just outside the lamp's radiance, with his friends gathered around him in his screened-off sanctum, he looked like some little wrinkled god. There's no telling how old he is—he might be forty or sixty, for all I could tell. His eyes are kind and very sad, with the appealing, puzzled look that we see in a monkey's eyes. He has a small son whom he worships, a slant-eyed lad who is growing tall and clean-limbed, and whose eyes are not in the least sad.

A dozen years ago Ah Chee sent to China for a bride, the money going with the order. She came one day, a lovely little thing and very young. He idolized her just as he does his son now. Every boat from China brought embroidered clothes for her delight. Most of these clothes are there to-day in chests in Ah Chee's room. She bore him a son within the first year of their marriage.

About two years after the birth of her son she bore another child and the baby died. Then one day she eloped with one of the men whom Ah Chee had befriended. Later, the little Chinaman, learning that she had been abandoned in Java, sent word to her to come back. But she would have nothing more to do with him. Now he sometimes gets money to her without her knowing its source. Perhaps she thinks it comes from the renegade. All her beautiful things wait for her to come back. But she will not come. Ah Chee sits in the shadow, silently, for he will never intrude on the white mas-

ters' conversation or pleasure, though he enjoys the friendly group around his table.

§

Curious how, among myriad recollections and impressions, certain utterly unimportant things will stand out as high lights. I remember meeting a happy native once who was singing the untranslatable arpeggio of the islands. In his hands he dangled a string of small jade fish just caught. Only that—I cannot forget it.

But there was one unforgettable moment of intangible beauty that I think I shall never duplicate. One night Nicki and I had wandered away from the noise of Ah Chee's, where a crowd of newly arrived gold prospectors were celebrating. It was a beautiful dim night, sweet with frangipani. Back in the Botanic Gardens was a spot rarely frequented, but of unearthly loveliness by night. We reached it through a narrow path hedged with jungle growth. Suddenly—always it took me unawares—we came upon a little clearing that looked like the setting for some fantastic opera. At the far end rose a mammoth ficus tree, its branches spreading eighty feet high, while at its feet huge dead limbs lay prone where they had fallen during the years, barkless and white in the moonlight. Jungled hills closed in upon the circle; luminous mushrooms grew among the dank undergrowth. In a thickly foliated tree hovered millions of fireflies. Nicki and I had found in each other the same love of books. And that night we had brought with us his powerful flashlight to read by, together with a copy of "The Light of Asia." Beginning where we had last left off, I read to the end, and closed the book:

The Dew is on the lotus!—Rise, Great Sun!
And lift my leaf and mix me with the wave
Om mani padme hum, the Sunrise comes!
The Dewdrop slips into the shining Sea!

Above us two flying foxes—huge bats—flapped clumsily, and then were still as they clung hanging to a branch. These and the throb of the everlasting drums from the hills were the only sounds in the world. Close to us stood a clump of slender bamboos. Out of nowhere, delicate as some lovely lyric thought, a fugitive trade breeze wandered through the bamboos, played there for a moment, bending them delicately . . . beautifully . . . and wandered on.

§

There is one woman in Rabaul who stands out from the rest. She lives on the social ragged edge; her rating is even lower than that of the lowliest of traders' wives. For the most part the women have nothing to do with her, nor do some of the men. But not all of the men.

The first time I saw her was at Ah Chee's, where one day she was keeping a planter company with a shandy. Nicki had warned me to avoid acquaintance with the attractive Mrs. Jessaby, chiefly because it might injure me in traveling alone through the islands, for her notoriety has spread through Melanesia. But I wasn't prepared for a genuine sacrifice in this direction. As I entered Ah Chee's that noon I was arrested by an English voice—a cultured, charming voice, husky, and with a blessed inflection that was an oasis in the desert of Austral-Cockney about me. I regarded her with some interest. She turned to me and, holding out her furled fan, said: "Miss America, I have been looking forward to

meeting you." I paused and suddenly found myself sitting down at table on friendly terms with this undeniably reprehensible woman, partly because it is not polite to refuse a "spot" in the islands and largely because I was drawn inexplicably toward Mrs. Jessaby.

She and her planter were good enough to be flatteringly interested in my adventure out to New Guinea alone, and admiring of what they chose to term my "courage." Later I saw Mrs. Jessaby frequently along the shaded streets of Rabaul. But only once again did I have opportunity really to talk with her. In the little settlement of Rabaul she is an outstanding personality. When she passes along the street she seems to leave an elusive trail of the romance of gay cities, sophistication, cosmopolitanism. She is not beautiful—her eyes are too closely set together for that—but she has shapely ankles and hands, and her ungirdled figure is pleasantly rounded. Nor is she young any more, though there are remarkably unfrayed remnants of a husky-voiced, lithe-moving youth that must always have drawn men to her. She is in the ageless forties. She is superbly poised. If her social ostracism troubles her, the world does not know it.

She came out of England some years ago. Why she chose New Guinea, rather than some other and more promising port, I don't know. She is too purposeful a woman to have been part of the flotsam washed up against far-lying coral shores. White women are scarce in New Guinea, and the lure of the gold fields was then, as now, drawing reckless adventurers from the corners of the earth. She bought herself a tract of land fronting on the water, her only neighbors being the natives whose villages spread low grass roofs beneath tall, leaning palms along the beach. Her native servants

built for her a house of limbung poles, and a path was worn to her door.

Her exile has done her no perceptible harm. Her dark eyes remain amused and good-humored, her brown hair waves elegantly and closely. Boats from Sydney bring her smart Continental frocks. About her is an elegance and well-groomedness that sets her altogether apart from the island white women.

Occasionally, not often, she appears like a shining constellation for a brief interval at a ball in the European Hotel. Then she may wear a white gown, beaded so that it clings to her shapely thighs and cut so that it displays the provoking beauty of an attractive woman's back. She and her gold-miner cavalier of the moment do not stay for long. He will order half a dozen bottles of champagne, pop all the corks, whether or not the wine is to be consumed, and rush off in one of Ah Chee's motor-cars.

Government House is closed to her. To the head of the great mission at Rabaul she is a thorn in the flesh, but I have seen her glance at the tall, rusty, fever-racked missionary with amused and tolerant eyes.

She had said to me, "I should be happy to have you to tea with me, if you ever feel inclined, Miss America. I live in a strange little place." One day my feet led me along the road from town, the blue sea on one hand, the dull green mountains on the other. It was exercise I needed, but I knew all the time I was going to tea with Mrs. Jessaby. A short distance out of Rabaul, at the crude gateway to her province, an old luluai, a king at the gates, has his small village of two woven-palm houses on stilts, with two wives and as many pickaninnies. He was a rheumy old codger, in a faded red laplap, sitting cross-legged on the platform of his

hut, alternately biting from a betel-nut and conveying powdered lime to his mouth by means of a long kombung stick.

"Missus, 'e stop 'long house belong 'im?" I asked.

"Yessah, 'im 'e stop," he replied. Two giggling young marys appeared spasmodically in the hut's doorway. He spoke to one of them quickly in tribal lingo and she vanished into the hut to fetch two eggs. The luluai (chief) took them from her and presented them to me, solemnly. For a moment I was at a loss, then I recalled that a gift must always be requited with a gift. Two cigarettes from my case were received with a broad, sunny smile. The formalities were over.

I came upon Mrs. Jessaby gathering flowers from her garden—a garden of marigolds, gentians, and yellow poppies that was like a breath of England. It must have taken infinite patience and labor to nurture that garden in Rabaul. As she stood up to greet me I could see pleasure in her eyes because I had come.

"Your luluai swapped me two keos for a couple of Craven A's." I held out the eggs. "You can have them for nothing."

"Have no faith in the keos," she replied, relieving me of them. "Seven out of the last thirteen he sold me held little secrets." Hens lay their eggs in caches all over the place, and when happened upon by egg-hunting kanakas they are harbored further until enough are collected to market. Several hot weeks may intervene.

We turned to the thatched house. Bougainvillea rioted over it, an avalanche of purple flowers; steps led to a tiny porch; it looked a crazy little fairy-tale house on stilts. Inside, there were two small rooms, with rough limbung floors; detached, at the rear, were house-cook and house-washwash.

A house little better than a native's, but she had made it a home. A couple of comfortable wicker chairs, a table, a truly beautiful walnut chest (relic of some German homestead), a table, a bookshelf with books in three languages, these and she had done the trick.

A Buka boy, black as coal, in an immaculate, bordered laplap, served tea and delicious little sandwiches and cakes out under an arbor of bougainvillea. A hundred yards away the blue water fingered the shore. The old three hundred ton steamboat, *Siar*, lay a black and decaying hulk in mid-harbor. Behind the house was a fringe of jungle, from which came the steady business-like beating of half a dozen kundus (drums) and the chanting of voices. A village singsing was in progress. Later we walked over to see it. Six men were squatting in a semicircle, swaying back and forth, their right hands beating a frenzied tattoo on the taut lizard skin of their drums, their throats emitting a hoarse chant. In the cleared space a dozen native boys, crowned with leaves and with palm fronds imitating the tail-feathers of a paradise bird, were doing an equation in perpetual motion and carrying on the hoarse chorus. With constantly moving feet, their knees flexed and unbent, their bodies turned and straightened again and again. The singsing would probably last, off and on, for twenty-four hours.

Mrs. Jessaby and I talked of many things, inconsequentialities for the most part, but not of herself. If I am any judge, hers is a quick and trained intellect that could hold its own anywhere. Here was a great woman wasted on a little Pacific outpost. And she appeared altogether serene, quite content with life. There was no trace of wistfulness about her.

It came sunset time. The trade breeze returned to the

island. Outrigger canoes, with a cargo of natives and a great oval wicker fishing trap, moved silently, smoothly down the coast. The soft rose light gradually enveloped us like a mantle. A cocoanut dropped from a tall palm behind us, startling a flying fox. We rose, myself to go. As we looked out over the harbor, the serene reflection of the volcano seemed to reach across the lagoon to lay a friendly hand on this solitary place.

Well, the husky English voice had charmed me once again. But *why* had this woman deliberately chosen to live in this tiny, relentless place?





VII

PRODIGIOUS BLACKBIRDERS

THE Mandated Territory has produced two great recruiters. Their careers are too good to be hidden in the annals of obscure atolls of the South Pacific. A recruiter, be it known, is an agent who "signs on" natives for a period of labor, chiefly for plantations. Of yore he was called "blackbirder." A recruiter's life is a hard one—months of weary pushing through bush and jungle into the hinterland villages, constant danger from disease, injury, and hostile natives. But it is a lucrative profession, for planters are glad to pay £12 (\$60) a head for the savages; while carriers for the gold fields bring £20 a head.

Both men I have in mind are still living, though already they are legends. One is no longer in the islands, for he sank very low in the human scale and the Government paid his way "down south." They are Bill Towers and Bluey Errin. In the Australian territory every man with red hair is dubbed "Bluey."

Bill Towers I have seen. It was one evening at the old German hotel at Kokopo outside of Rabaul, where automobile parties generally end up to make whoopee. Towers was informally clad in striped pajamas, and was in a noisily

mellow state. Every one is tolerant of his eccentricities, which are many, partly because of his remarkable career, partly because of his good humor.

Back in the days before the war, in Australia, Towers used to be a juggling clown in a circus. He is also a remarkable ventriloquist. Out of these talents he has made a comfortable fortune in New Guinea, for both have stood him in good stead among the impressionable head-hunters and savages. His courage is dauntless, his sense of humor and of the grotesque is enormous. He respects neither God nor devil. He somehow keeps on friendly terms with most of the missionaries, though he has recruited their converts from under their noses.

His means of recruiting have been more effective than ethical. His pulling of a shilling or an egg out of a boy's wool; his explaining to the natives that they would be able to dig holes in the ground to plant cocoanuts if they followed him, and digging a hole under their very eyes and uncovering in it a shilling or some desirable bauble; his ability to pull a piglet out of his Stetson before their wide gaze; the ease with which he removed his apparently firm teeth, such wonders as these play upon primitive fear and respect.

Towers used to carry a ventriloquist's dummy with him on recruiting expeditions. He would assemble the village and, holding the dummy on his knees, converse with it, an interpreter translating to the open-mouthed savages. The conversation would embrace questions regarding the delights of "signing on" with the "white-fella-mastah," and the dummy would expound, in a high-pitched voice and in no uncertain language, the benefits of life on a plantation. To the natives the dummy was a tambaran, or spirit, and the recruiter no less than deity.

But strangest of all were Bill Towers' clothes. Anything to inspire wonder among the savages! One of his favorite costumes was a relic of circus days, a pink ballet outfit with cotton tights. Another costume, and one less commendable, was the clerical garb of a missionary, for use in villages under mission influence.

There is a famous story about how Towers won a bet of £50 from a missionary. There is warfare between the missionaries and the planters. The missionaries want the souls of the natives; the planters—hence the recruiters—want their bodies to do the work that must be done if the white man is to survive in New Guinea. The missionaries discourage the boys from signing on as recruits. Bill Towers one day bet a prominent missionary that he could recruit natives from off the very mission grounds. The father poured himself out another beer and bet him he couldn't. The mission influence among his converts was too strong to be demoralized.

Towers waited several months until the missionary's vigilance was somewhat relaxed. Then one lazy day an outrigger canoe pulled up along the shore of the mission plantation, and a lank black-coated figure wearing false whiskers and an inverted collar, and with a Bible in his hand, got out. He sat down under a tree, opened his book, and began reading aloud in pidgin, as if he were merely reading to himself. This attracted various kanakas who assumed that he was a missionary. A crowd gathered but he seemed not to notice it at all. Into the scripture reading, however, he began weaving elaborations to the effect that Jesus had immediate need of boys to work for him, and that rewards awaited those who would follow him and "make paper."

After sufficiently appealing to their primitive emotions, Towers took stock of his fifty-odd recruits. He conducted

them to the District Officer and sent for the self-confident missionary to view his triumph. The father came. Exactly what happened I don't know, but Towers released his recruits and collected his bet. He and the father had another drink together. Towers has, for the present at any rate, turned to gold prospecting in Dutch New Guinea.

Bluey Errin was also a prodigious blackbirder. His hair was the color of carrots. No one seems to know what his Christian name was, or what his origin. Some say he was formerly a bus driver "down south." But he was one of the best recruiters the Mandated Territory ever knew. He recruited for the official Expropriation Board after Australia took over the German South Pacific colonies.

His favorite recruiting costume was famous. It was originally an old claw-hammer dress suit, including a high hat. When the outfit needed replacement he commissioned a Chinese tailor in Rabaul to copy it in white calico, tail-coat and all, bound with red, and with large red buttons, and with red stripes down the trousers legs. Across the back of the coat, in red braid, was the legend EXPRO BOARD. A huge top-hat, in the manner of Uncle Sam's, was covered with white calico, and from its crown floated many colored streamers. It is easy to imagine the effect of this apparition on unsuspecting natives.

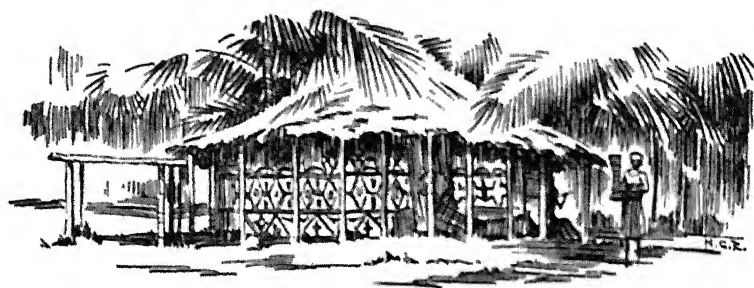
Bluey had many tricks in his bag. Once he went into a village that had come under mission influence and prayed there for two solid hours, kneeling before a grave, performing strange rites and sprinkling the ground lavishly with a heavy-smelling trade scent beloved in New Guinea. So impressive were his actions that the natives thought he was a man for them to follow, and a number of them did follow

him. You are entitled to laugh only if you have never fallen for a stuffed shirt.

Like most of the whites in far-lying countries, Bluey had the courage of the true gambler. He entered a jungle village once and found that the wife of the luluai, or chief, was about to have a baby. The luluai particularly wanted a son; indeed, on no account did he want another girl baby. Bluey made such an impression with his assurances that he could guarantee the birth of a boy baby if the chief would give him a certain number of strong recruits that the luluai believed him and handed over a dozen of the best boys of the village.

The woman's time was near. So Bluey made a getaway with his recruits. A savage chief is no man to fool around with if you have betrayed his confidence. However, curiosity was too strong for the recruiter, and he stationed some of his carriers to find out what the mary should be delivered of. She gave birth that night to a son, and the red-headed recruiter, in ridiculous calico suit and streamer-bedecked hat, returned to the village in triumph. The luluai had a singing in his honor, and pressed upon him some more recruits.

They say that in the jungle Bluey kept more or less sober and keen, but during his leisure he drank beyond all reason. I have heard men who knew him tell that once while traveling on the island steamer up to Madang, a station on the New Guinea coast, he was so drunk on arrival that he couldn't stand up, and refusing help he crawled on all fours up the road to the bungalow that sheltered him. Dressed, he was, in his white and red swallow-tail.



VIII

WAY OF THE JUNGLE

THE native customs of New Guinea are so bewildering in character and number that they are like to addle the brain of a casual onlooker. For instance, ask a native to explain a singsing, which is a joint ceremony that may involve days of hoarse chanting and frantic, body-and-nerve-exhausting contortions on the part of the participants. The answer is merely: "Me no savvy; fashion belong before." Ask him his opinion of a custom of the white man, and his answer is: "Maskee! Fashion belong white-fella-mastah!"

It is virtually impossible to excite wonder in a native by means of a scientific invention, with the exception of the gramophone. The airplane may have elicited from him a surprised "Goddam!" at first sight, but it frightened him not at all, nor does even the rawest recruit shrink from a ride "all same pigeon." The motor car is simply ship-kerosene-belong-bush, and is accepted phlegmatically. But I have seen a crowd of natives rooted to the spot, eyes bulging, hair electrified with terror, at the sight of a little green rubber snake that Charlie Booth surreptitiously removed from his waistcoat.

It was one night when I was traveling by island steamer

down the coast of New Guinea. Booth wanted to show me the effect of this foolish little air-inflated toy on the natives. Charlie Booth is another famous recruiter. We were in the ship's bar this one evening, and he stepped on deck and summoned all of the available native boys—servants, carriers, recruits—to come to the ports and door-ways. They did, expectantly. Charlie stood up and began feeling in his bosom as if in search of something. Gradually he brought forth the little green head of the snake. The faces at doors and ports were a study in change of expression. Fear gripped each brown being; eyes widened and seemed to start from their sockets; even breathing seemed to cease. Booth took a sudden step forward, and broke their paralysis by doing so. There was panic, hoots, yells. Bedlam let loose as they bolted. One boy headed for a flying leap into the water, but was restrained by an officer. And for the rest of the voyage Booth was always circled widely by the natives; he held a power over them that would never be broken until one of their number should gather up courage to touch the dreaded rubber reptile and find it a fake and harmless. But that is a very remote possibility. That snake has saved Booth's life.

A strange thing among the New Guinea natives is their extreme susceptibility to autosuggestion. A boy will come to his master in apparent health—organically fit and running no temperature—and will announce simply: "Mastah, me laik die."

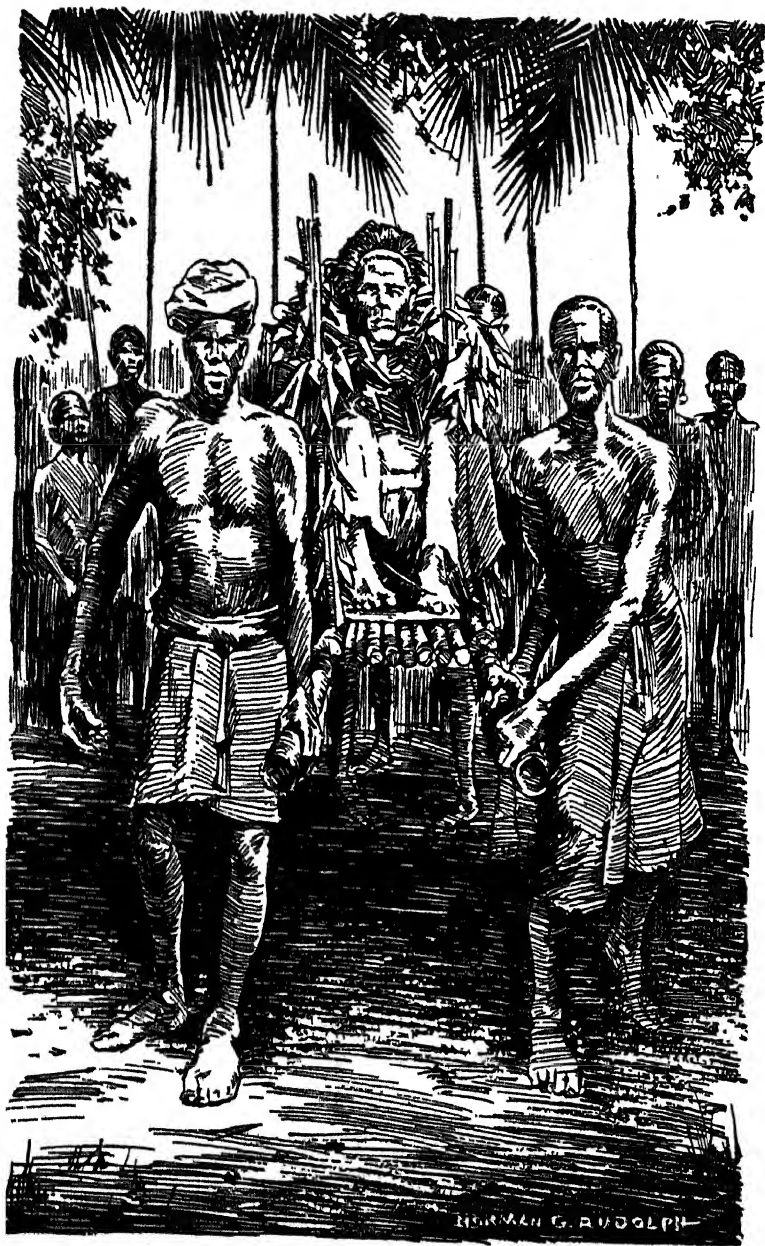
A master has learned not to be sympathetic upon such suggestion; that, above all things, is fatal. The boy will be dogged and resigned, and inquiry will reveal that he has been told, or dreamed, or felt intuitively, that an evil spell has been placed upon him, or that Sangooma (a death spirit

met with throughout New Guinea) has sprinkled him with fatal white powder. And he will often die; he will creep off to his house, or even steal away to his village, and by concentrating his mind on the spell, or by even just letting himself go into the fatal frame of mind, he will be dead within three days. The popular pragmatic antidote seems to be to belt the victim out of his unwholesome state of mind, or to force him into such hard physical work that he has no time to concentrate upon dying.

Among the natives there are many fantastic and gruesome methods of disposing of the dead. While the Gov'men' imposes sanitary burial within its immediate jurisdiction, and is enforcing its practice to the best of its ability, the traditional ceremonies and burials take place close to white settlements.

In Kaewieng, New Ireland, while I was there, an important luluai died. True to custom, his tribe trussed him up in his best—"best" in this case being an old suit of white duck, acquired the Lord knows where, and without doubt never before worn by him. They loaded him down with necklaces of shells, beads, what not. They stuck a flower behind each venerable ear, and propped him up in a sitting position in a sort of portable arm-chair that they had constructed from bamboo. Then they set him up on a platform in their village for three days, preparing for the final ceremony and feast. After that the corpse was taken out to a little island offshore, and burned. It was high time. Then came the singing feast, lasting for twenty-four hours.

Once the D. O.'s back is turned, the natives return to their ancient and revolting burial customs. In many parts of the islands the corpse is buried a foot beneath the dirt floor of his hut, while the rest of the family continue to live above him.



This is because he was dear to them, and they don't want to lose their dead completely.

Also, there exists, though under the ominous frown of the Gov'men', the tree burial. It is becoming rarer as white control penetrates beyond the coast. The body is placed on a small platform built among the branches of a tree. It decays and drips through the interstices of the platform into bowls set there for the purpose. The drip is then mixed with the food of the tribe, who believe that thus they inherit some of the courageous and other good qualities of the deceased. For the same reason, when the bones on the tree platform are quite bare, they are divided among the survivors, to be worn either about the neck or inserted in ear or nose septum.

In the village of Woli, in New Britain, they tie the body of an important man up against the wall of his house until he has decomposed sufficiently to remove his jawbone. This is worn by some native of the village deemed worthy of the possession; sometimes it is bound by a colored fiber ribbon to keep the teeth from falling out. After the removal of the jawbone the body may be buried.

In the hinterland, where white government has not yet penetrated, widows are likely to have a rough spin of it. Again the customs vary widely. Sometimes the widow is strangled. For this grim ceremony she is decorated and painted lavishly, and every one of importance gathers to witness the sacrifice. It is performed at the husband's funeral feast, and she is buried in an extended position in the grave with her husband. If the tribal custom is polygamy, all the widows suffer the same treatment. The social group of the husband acknowledge the sacrifice, and pay pigs and shells to the executioners.

In parts of the Bainings section of New Britain, in the wonderful mountain country, when a married man dies he is buried in a shallow grave beneath the floor of his hut. His widow is required to sleep on the grave of her husband for at least five days and nights. For three days she is not permitted to eat of taro, but she may eat bananas; and for twelve months she is not permitted to eat of pork. After that, if she does not wish to remarry, and refrains from eating pork, no man can claim her for a wife.

Sometimes on the death of a near relative a man will forswear forever the eating of pig.

Among the tribes of New Guinea the ceremony of circumcision is widely practised, though it is not universal. Where it is practised, it is a most solemn and important rite, accompanied with pomp and feasting. While this is performed long before the boy is initiated into approaching manhood, it nevertheless marks a departure from his childhood and confers upon him certain rights and distinctions.

The crowd gathers. The lad to be honored is washed in running water of a river or a stream, and gaily decorated. He is then escorted to a ghost-house, where the operation is performed by one of the older men of the village. After which he is carried on the shoulders of the man who performed the operation to the scene of festive activity. Kundus and garamuts are beaten wildly, and, chanting, the tribe marches round and round the two central figures, the women forming a circle outside the men. This chanting and circling lasts for a long time. Then the crowd breaks up, and the feasting begins, to last several days. When it is all over, the lad is returned to the men's house for two months, during which time he may not be looked upon by the female mem-

bers of the tribe. After this period he is returned to society, but thenceforth he sleeps in the men's house, though he continues to eat with his parents.

Another important ceremony of childhood for both girls and boys is the blackening of teeth. There are various methods of doing this. Sometimes, instead of black, a native has bright red teeth. This color is acquired by much chewing of betel-nut and powdered lime. The black effect, which shines like jet until the teeth become rotten stumps, is the result of an intricate process of repeatedly applying a certain kind of earth.

Among the Kols, a tribe of New Britain, the ceremony of blackening teeth comes when full manhood has been attained. The constituents are tawal, a soil containing sulphur, and talis, a pungent leaf. These are baked separately, wrapped in leaves, and mixed together. The mixture resembles coal-tar. Cooling hardens it a little, and then it is spread on a strip of leaf of a size to fit over the teeth. It is placed over the outside of the upper and lower rows of teeth. The native undergoing this beautification can eat nothing for three days, nor can he talk. The tawal sets like enamel and glistens like polished ebony. During the three days of tawal setting the initiate is kept in confinement, and no woman may look upon him; he must not so much as glimpse a mary.

Although I have encountered it often, even among house-boys and general servants in Rabaul itself, I could never discover any clear explanation of the tamboo forbidding a native to utter his own name or that of a close relative. Ask a boy his name, and usually he will stand silent, though the boy next to him will give it. This tamboo extends also to the speaking of the names of certain of his relatives—his wife's parents and his wife's sister's husband. Unless the

person is dead, or has gone away from his tribe permanently to reside, the native will not utter the name; he will refer the question to some one else, who will volunteer the information.

I once asked a boy: "Posomuli, what name this longlong fashion belong you, you no can talktalk along name belong you?" Posomuli was generally glad to give information, but this time I merely got, again, the enigmatic: "Me no savvy, missus; fashion belong before."

The tribal customs of New Guinea are many. They vary in detail from group to group. The following outline of the habits and customs of one flourishing tribe will give some general hints of kanaka life in New Guinea and other islands of Melanesia.

Among the endless mountain ranges that stretch into the hinterland of New Britain live the Kols. Except for the occasional visit of a patrol officer, to keep before them the reminder of an existing Gov'men', they are virtually untouched by white influence. They form a little nation by themselves, which is subdivided into various social groups, with a common language entirely different from that of the surrounding tribes, and with a definitely organized code of laws.

To the men falls the lot of clearing land and staking out the ground to be cultivated, and the planting of taro, which is one of the main articles of their diet. The men also erect the palm-thatched houses, hunt the wild pig, snare the wallaby for food, and catch what small fish and shrimps the mountain streams supply; this last they do by means of small wicker fishing traps shaped like little Japanese lanterns. The Kols are for the most part a peaceable folk, merely making occasional raids on neighboring villages. They are

not cannibals, nor apparently ever have been. Hereditary feuds are kept active by unsportily bumping off from ambush some member of an opposing faction.

The marys cultivate the gardens, and in general look after their men-folks' comfort, endeavoring, as all over the world, to keep them interested. Each mary is allotted about an acre of ground to care for after the men have done the original planting of taro. Here, where the mountain rains keep everything verdant, nature is generous. Sugar-cane grows healthily, taro achieves such great size that sometimes a whole family can feast from one, and there are abundant bananas and sweet, yellow-red yams.

You can almost find it in your heart to envy the Kols in their mountain villages. The naked, round-bellied pickaninies are care-free and happy, as all children should be; they play with miniature bows and arrows (which, strangely enough, they do not use upon maturity), and inflated pigs' bladders serve as prehistoric balls. The bright-eyed women are treated with an affection rare among New Guinea tribes. The old people are deferred to, and it is by a council of old men that the villages are governed. Polygamy is practised. Sometimes a man will marry sisters, under the impression that thus he is making for domestic peace.

When he is six years old the male child adopts a garment of bark-cloth, a narrow strip wound twice around his waist and once under the crotch. The marys wear an extremely brief skirt made of the twisted fibers of a vine.

Some alarm has been expressed at the danger of race suicide in New Guinea. It may be well founded. Certainly the native women have an astounding knowledge of contraceptive and abortive measures; not unusual, it is said,

among tribes that are or have been cannabilistic, and whose women cut up the victims.

While child-bearing seems less painful among primitive races than our own, the New Guinea mary sees many hardships and inconveniences that she may escape by birth control. Food is often hard to raise, and she has to raise it. Infant mortality is heavy. She must nurse her child for eighteen long months, or more; it is the custom. She has become wise in the ways of preventing undesired offspring.

Among the Kols, however, this aversion to child-bearing does not seem so common. Perhaps that is because the getting of food is comparatively easy there. Much is made of the coming of a child. When a woman is found to be pregnant a singsing is held. Then her husband either builds her a tiny house for herself near the women's quarters, or makes an exclusive enclosure for her. The young mother-to-be, when her time comes, crouches on her haunches, supported by women of the village, who try to assist her labors by massaging her abdomen. Much secrecy attends these ministrations, and it is very important that the afterbirth be placed in a tree in the jungle, that it may not be discovered by wild pigs. If all goes well, and normally, the delivery is soon over with, and the resilient young mother goes off to bathe herself in some sheltered spot, while the women wash the new-born child. Then another singsing takes place. During the period of pregnancy and until the child is weaned the father has no intercourse with his wife, but other women are furnished him in the interim.

The sexual code of New Guinea is clearly defined and strictly enforced. Intercourse before marriage is neither darkly frowned upon nor encouraged. Virginity is not at all

a requisite in a wife. Nor do the occasional "illegitimate" children seem to come under any social cloud. But adultery is a cardinal transgression, to be swiftly dealt with. The code is satisfied if the lover pay the injured husband an amount far above the lady's original cost. But if he cannot pay enough pearl-shell and pig, or other proper money, the matter is fought out between the two men.

A man buys his wife. The Kols appraise a well-favored and healthy mary at two fathoms of beads or shell money, one shell armlet, two taro-scrapers of black-lip pearl-shell, a feast of one or two pigs, and a quantity of taro. The bride's parents contribute a feast of equal value. The fathers of the two principals transact the preliminaries. Then the groom and his people go to the bride's village, where there is a big singsing, and whereafter he abides.

The slightest incident gives the New Guinea natives a welcome excuse for a singsing, which is a combined feast and ceremonial dance. They love their singsings, and will spend weeks in preparation. Sometimes a number of friendly tribes will go in for a partnership celebration. Wonderfully carved and colored ornaments are made with infinite patience; great totem poles are set up; devildevil masks are brought out. The head-dresses



of osprey and trailing paradise plumes are glorious things. Faces and bodies are streaked with paint, eyelids colored, and eyes ringed. Those who are not dancing stand around in a great circle and chant vocifer-



ously what is usually the narrative of the singsing in progress, the dancers joining hoarsely. The great garamuts have a place of honor; these are huge drums made of hollowed-out tree-trunks, on which a tattoo is beaten with a long pole.

The dancers make their entry into the clearing from various corners of the jungle, their bodies crouched and knees flexed. They shuffle along, turning from right to left, brandishing a spear or magnificently carved ornaments, progressing to the center of the circle. Clouds of dust are raised by the restless feet, the air reeks with the exceptionally strong stench of perspiring kanakas. There is an *accelerando* of noise and movement and excitement. Emotions, easily aroused, become inflamed. At the height of the excitement sound and movement will stop for a few minutes, to be taken up again as suddenly. Often the crowd will be so emotionally overwrought that they will mistake symbolism for reality, and a singsing will end in an orgy, or actual warfare.

Singsings always last for hours, and not uncommonly they last for days. They conclude with a grand finale of noise and movement. Then comes the feast.

Some singsings are indulged in by men only. One of these, I believe, is peculiar with the Kols. It is a solitary ceremony; its object is the conquest of a particularly coveted mary. The lovelorn native secures some leaves of a certain red croton that grows commonly in native gardens. He crushes them with his hands, and sings a special song while doing so, this being part of the spell. At a propitious moment he steals behind the mary, usually when she goes to the stream to wash. She carries a basket or fiber-cloth bag, which invariably contains some taro. He stealthily dips his magic croton leaf in the water, and sprinkles a few drops on her taro.

Then he slips away, presumably unnoticed. The lady eats of her taro, all unaware of course of its enchantment. That night she finds in her heart an overwhelming desire for her lover and seeks him out—if she wants to.

The Kols' calendar, like that of most primitive races, marks time generally by the moon. Their seasons are also subdivided, as by "the time of the taro," the "time of the ripening of sugar-cane," and the "time of the gathering of the yam." They do not keep track of the passage of years. They can count to about twenty, but use different terms in counting different objects; taros will be counted by one method, cocoanuts by another, and so on.

There is no more plaintive sound in the world than the notes of a bamboo flute or pan-pipe in the hands of a Melanesian. His rhythm and melody are baffling to the Occidental. Neither major nor minor in mode, it has nothing in common with our system of bar building. But this thin, untranslatable wisp of sound, when the tropic dusk falls like swift veils of black chiffon, is of heartaching beauty.





IX

MASKEE!

WHEREVER white influence has penetrated in New Guinea, the universal language between white man and Chinese and natives is pidgin English. None of it is the allee-samee, belly-cold variety of our own Chinese laundries. New Guinea pidgin is made up of English, Chinese, German, French, Portuguese, Malay, and native lingo. Its construction defies all rules of every respectable grammar. Also, it is perfectly graphic.

After the first delicate hesitancy, I found myself using freely such phrases as the following to the native, or receiving them, without batting an eye: "Goddam! 'Im 'e all bugger up pinish!" which means that something has met with disaster. Just as eye-belong-'im indicates the lid of anything or the cork of a bottle, so ass-belong-'im indicates the under part, or bottom, of anything.

This last caused me a little embarrassment the first time I heard it, for I was neither very familiar yet with pidgin English nor well acquainted with Nicki, in whose company I was. I wanted to eat of a fresh, ripe cocoanut, and Nicki had sent a house-boy after one for me. With one blow of a

copra knife the boy cleft the nut in two. I picked up a half and started to loosen a segment of the flesh, when the boy seemed concerned. "Missus," he begged, "no kaikai along ass-belong-'im!" I paused in some doubt, the cocoanut midway to my mouth, while Nicki explained cheerfully: "He means, eat the top half, that's sweeter."

But the keyword of pidgin, and of New Guinea, is "mas-kee." Of all words it is the first learned and oftenest used. Literally, it means "Never mind," and is equivalent to a shrug of the shoulders. After maskee, the next words and phrases one learns have to do with personal comfort. Kaikai is important; it means food and to eat. Suzu is milk; keo is egg; bullomacow is meat; pud-ding stands for anything that serves for dessert, no matter what its form; liklik is a little, and liklik-too-much means very little. By the same token, plenty-too-much indicates a lot. Fowl of any description is cockeroo. A native speaks of his hair as grass-belong-me; and I was enlightened to learn from my boy that a feather duster was "broom-belong-grass-belong-cockeroo." The classic of pidgin English is the phrase indicating a piano, i. e., big-fella-bokis-you-fight-'im-'e-cry. To gammon means to fool, or to lie; therefore the native mind has dubbed the wooden Treasury Building in Rabaul house-money-gammon, it being the house-money (bank) where no actual money is kept, as opposed to the house-money-true, or real bank. First-time means before or ahead, while behind means later.

If, for instance, supposing you were domestically inclined, you wished to order a boy to beat an egg first, and then fetch some drinking water, you would admonish him thus: "Now, first-time you fight 'im keo, behind you ketch 'im wash-wash belong drink!"

With the advent of Christianity into New Guinea, the

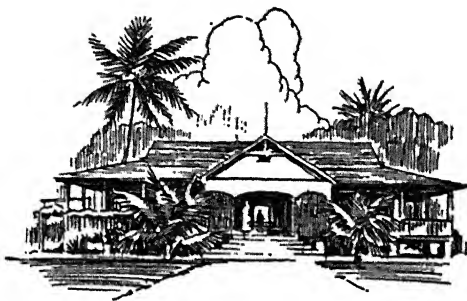
necessarily graphic portrayal of the Testaments, particularly the Old, lends a refreshingly new interpretation to the Word. I have a native boy's version of Genesis. He called it the story of Adam now Eva. Gabriel is described as tultul (police-boy)-belong-Deus. "Now Gabriel 'e no man true. Head belong 'im all same man; now skin (body) belong 'im, now hand belong 'im, all same cockeroo." Thus does a kanaka vision the Archangel.

A German missionary spent many a long day transcribing part of the Old Testament into pidgin. Below is the phonetic pidgin version of the Ten Commandments, which the New Guinea native finds so bewildering:

1. I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt have no other Gods before me.
You lotu (worship) 'long one fella Deo dass all.
2. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
You no call 'im name belong Deo, mastah belong you, nothing.
3. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
You tamboo 'long work Sunday.
4. Honor thy Father and thy Mother.
You hamamas (honor) long papa now mama belong you.
5. Thou shalt not kill.
You no make 'im die one fella man, now mary, now pickaninny.
6. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
You no hold 'im fast mary belong other fella man.
7. Thou shalt not steal.
You no steal.

8. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
You no gammon (lie).
9. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.
You no laik 'im mary belong other fella man.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods.
You no laik 'im altogether something belong other fella man.

Pidgin English is easily mastered. Oddly, it is only in English that pidgin seems to work satisfactorily. At first the German settlers tried pidgin German, but abandoned it to adopt pidgin English. For them this adoption had an additional virtue: the natives would not get a glimmering of German by way of pidgin German, and so the Germans could discourse among themselves in their own tongue without their servants' understanding them.



X

SKIPPER WATSON

IN New Guinea they say there are but two seasons—the wet and the rainy. But that's unfair. Throughout June, which was the month of my arrival, the trades usually blow fair and soft, and the seas are as calm and as blue as the sky. The southeast monsoon extends theoretically from April to the middle of November. The northwest monsoon season brings rain for days at a time, and can make the sea a grim, gray expanse of mountains.

While I liked living in Rabaul, and was getting a splendid foundation for further wanderings among the atolls, I knew that pretty soon I should have to start out again before the northwest trades began. Somewhere I wanted to find a schooner that was prowling through Melanesia, and would take a passenger. I knew little of schooners; but I had been seeing them come in and go out of Rabaul harbor. Living on one, it seemed to me, would be an idyllic existence. I met with discouragement. People said that no schooner was fit for a woman to travel on for any length of time; besides which, schooners didn't wander. They had definite charters from island to island and back to Rabaul.

I looked over the possibilities. A little island steamer was

going to the Solomons; I had had an invitation to make as long a visit as I cared in the Solomons. But New Ireland caught my interest. A little thirty-ton schooner was bound for Kaewieng, the concentrating station of New Ireland. I didn't know a soul there, but some one gave me a letter of introduction (something I never use), and I had unfaltering faith in good luck. I didn't realize that getting out of New Ireland without returning to Rabaul would be difficult. So I decided to leave on the schooner *Bonta*. With the several plantation stops along the New Britain and New Ireland coasts the trip to Kaewieng would take three days.

Rabaul had never looked so lovely as on the day I left her for the other islands. Solid-wheeled carts, drawn by oxen, and with flower-decked kanakas drowsing over the wheels, trundled slowly along the shore road. A nun passed me, from the Catholic mission; her eyes were as blue as the sea, and in her Alice-blue robe with its starched white bertha and hood she looked too holy for the Chinatown road. At her heels tagged a dozen Chinese children. Magnificent casuarinas flecked the avenue with flickering shadows, and along it walked people with whom I had spent many a pleasant hour. Arm in arm, Nicki and I strolled, for the last time in our lives, up to the Gardens, genuinely upset at parting. The Gardens were lovely, but not as beautiful as by moonlight.

I should have felt much worse at leaving if another adventure had not spread before me. I knew what I wanted to do, and I knew that there were very many obstacles in my path, but there would be a thrill in getting over the obstacles. I wanted to get up the Sepik River, in New Guinea, somehow. They said it was impossible. Trading schooners didn't go up

the Sepik, nor did the island steamer touch upon it. Only two white women had been there; one of them had since died. The Sepik natives are head-hunters, and only the fringe of the country is under government control. But I desired desperately to go there, and to meet the great Father Kirschbaum.

Nevertheless, I felt badly at parting with Nicki. And so did he. On the tiny afterdeck of the *Bonta* I waved good-by to him as the schooner joggled off. Waved until he could no longer see the fluttering handkerchief. And poignantly I thought of all the good times we had had together. I hoped, wistfully, that he would remember—always.

§

The *Bonta* was not a bad little schooner—as schooners go in the South Pacific. She wasn't very dirty. If you would know what luxury is, travel for a bit on a South Pacific twenty-ton ketch, particularly if the weather gets a bit dirty. Thus you learn that everything and every place that isn't *on* her is luxury.

As we pulled away from the Copra Wharf at Rabaul, I wasn't in a very happy frame of mind. In New Guinea all things rapidly take root. Even what seems through with life flourishes, planted in that warm earth, and I suddenly realized on leaving that I too had taken root there in Rabaul. New Guinea proper loomed up before my mind as a very big, very dark and dread country; and I as a female person very helpless and altogether mad to be off alone in strange seas, among an alien people, wandering, restless and curious, in a country that is still an enigma.

Through the increasing distance I saw Nicki's big form turn away. I had the impulse to tell the skipper to turn back,

that I'd changed my mind. But cool common sense said, "Don't be an idiot"; and I didn't be. Besides, I'd paid three pounds to get to Kaewieng. And also, that cool voice of common sense reminded me that the time to leave both places and people is when parting is hardest.

So I turned with what spirit remained in me, and regarded my ship. There was a tiny poopdeck, just large enough for a coil of rope and myself on a small wicker stool, if I dangled my feet over the schooner's side. The chief disadvantage of this seat was that if the schooner gave a sudden lurch I was likely to find myself in the sharks' happy hunting ground. There was, of course, no shelter here from the already broiling sun.

Three perpendicular steps led down to the very real luxury of an infinitesimal cabin-chartroom, the whole thing about eight feet square. The furniture was a bunk along either wall, a chart table, and a chest of drawers. There was a tiny port over one bunk. Three steps here led up to the foredeck, where squatted eight wild-haired savages (the crew); on the foredeck, too, was the gasoline engine and a stove for cooking. Two or three ropes of bananas dangled about in the way of everybody.

The foredeck boasted a canvas awning. There wasn't much cargo, starting out, for copra was to be picked up en route at plantations. I looked over the awninged deck at the crew. I smelled the rank odor of kanakas, oil, petrol, and stale copra, and, retreating, gave thanks for my two-foot poop-deck and the disinfecting tropical sun. Strangely enough, my spirits began to rise. It's funny what one's spirits will rise on. So I sat there for a couple of hours in that blessed state of almost inanimate luxuriousness which one so quickly falls into in the tropics. I had got over the state of being burned

red by the sun—the worst it could now do to me was to make me as brown as a kanaka.

Lunch-time came, but I was not tempted. If we hadn't made two plantation stops I should probably have starved until we reached Kaewieng. Despite the fact that the "cabin" had been newly painted, roaches swarmed too thick to make the thought of food enticing. The chest of drawers served as pantry, dish-closet, safe, and storehouse, and the cockroaches frolicked too close to tinned butter, bread, tea, and biscuits to suit my appetite.

An egg in the morning I had mistrusted and with reason. For dinner I found that I could do nicely without tinned corned beef or sheep's tongues, and the sight of lukewarm tinned apricots turned my stomach upside down. The tea was black and thick with sugar, in true island fashion. Nevertheless, these were served regularly at the appointed times, on an enameled tin plate. Once, draining a cup of coffee, my teeth closed on something that cracked brittly—only a cockroach!—and for a long, long time I swore off coffee. Even now I drink it with mind sternly averted, unless I am very sure of its origin.

A personable young Manus native from the Admiralty Islands was detailed to look after my comfort. He was about twelve years old; his head was well-shaped, and his wool cropped more closely than is the wild Manus fashion. His ear-lobes dangled half-way to his shoulders, and the beads and shell tambaran (native money) wound around them indicated that he was very well off in the world. He wore a short red laplap confined about his waist with a gay bead belt, and behind his ears were thrust two fresh hibiscus blossoms. His forehead was whitened with lime powder. His eyes were bright and inquisitive. Bill Watson, the *Bonta's*

skipper, had come upon this little savage five years before out in the Admiraltys, orphaned and forlorn. So he had taken him from his bush village, and brought him up almost as his son. He had named him Baby. There was a great bond of affection and understanding between the taciturn Australian and the young savage. The lad was his master's shadow, doing about everything but breathing for him. I think Watson loved that boy.

Baby couldn't reconcile himself to the fact that I wasn't hungry. He would give vent to a mournful "tch, tch" every time he took away my untouched plate.

As far as features went, I think that Bill Watson was the ugliest man I have ever seen. His face was lined in folds that made him look like a caricatured anarchist. I had seen him a few times at Ah Chee's—a silent, unsociable man who never entered into the noisy table-talk around him. I liked his eyes, which belied the hard furrows of his face. Watson's eyes said that he had drawn away from the world because he couldn't help it, but that he still looked out at it longing for companionship. Perhaps that accounted for his strange affection for his adopted savage.

I don't know what story lay behind his forbidding exterior. They say he has a wife somewhere "down south." In Rabaul, after he had agreed, through Nicki and Marx, to transport me to New Ireland, Watson had come to me in Ah Chee's doorway, and said: "You probably know that I don't like women. I've never carried one on my schooner before. Don't expect me to talk to you."

"I understand that, Captain Watson," I had answered. "Don't give me a thought. I promise not to bother you."

Two and a half hours of joggling through Blanche Bay brought us to our first stop—a flourishing cocoanut planta-

tion on the New Britain coast. We were to take on some copra there, and I knew it would be several hours before we set forth again. We were met on the bridge by the overseer, who unsuccessfully concealed his surprise at seeing a woman aboard. Bill Watson amazed us both by introducing me pleasantly to the overseer, who in turn asked if I would like to wander up to the big plantation house where I should find cool drinks and could make myself comfortable. He regretted that the planter and his family were all away.

The plantation house was a magnificent bungalow, furnished not with island furniture, or relics of German days, but with excellent modern things imported from Sydney. On the great veranda, facing the sea from the hill, were comfortable divans and many chaises longues. Whiskey and soda stood ready and waiting for whoever desired it. A trade breeze blew fair and soft from the bay. Books and magazines lay about on chaises and tables. It was a delightful, restful place. So, in accord with island traditions, I poured myself out a whiskey-and-soda and drank a "Johnny Woodser" before stretching out.

I knew the tragedy that lived within the walls of this lovely bungalow. The plantation owner was a German who had wrested much wealth out of the soil that nurtured his palm trees. A quarter of a century ago he married one of the royal Samoans. His wife was beautiful, passionate, and amoral. They had two sons and a daughter, half-caste children, inheriting their mother's beauty and temperament, their father's pride and wilfulness. In addition, they had a handicap that neither of their pure-bred parents had labored under—the inferiority feeling that comes from being "half nigger."

The mother had eventually eloped with an Australian.

The three children, educated in Australian schools, had stormed through their adolescence seeking new sensations and spending money profligately. The oldest son, who looks like a bronze god, had drunk himself into a neurosis that sent him almost over the border-line of sanity. The younger son, barely twenty-one, had eloped with an Australian débutante whose family did not know of his kanaka blood. The marriage had come to tragic disaster, and the disillusioned child-bride had returned to her family. The daughter—beautiful in a tawny, faintly savage way—was barely eighteen, but already she was showing evidences of the kanaka strain.

It is always the woman who shows this heredity most plainly. They are moody, careless about their appearance, and show a primitive desire for bright colors and tawdry trinkets.

A large dowry went with the German's daughter if she married a white man, but even penniless white drifters hesitate to take a half-caste woman as a legal wife. For a while her fancy had lingered with a superlatively handsome Malay half-caste, a rather steady-going young man who had raised himself to a clerkship in Rabaul, and who would have made her a good husband. Doubtless her Teutonic father had forbidden the match, for a Malay, out there, is hardly better than a kanaka. So, at length, she married an Australian. He would have his hands full.

The palms were throwing long shadows when the *Bonta's* skipper and the overseer came over to the big bungalow. They came to ask me to have dinner with them at the overseer's shack. I was surprised at Bill Watson's change from the silent, morose man who at Ah Chee's had taken his meals and quickly departed again. Having embarked on his little

schooner, he was a different man. I could see that he was even making an effort to be agreeable. The overseer, however, seemed to be a bit unhappy. The presence of the lady seemed to have robbed him of his vocabulary.

His house was a bleakly bare affair, built on six-foot piles, and consisting of two small rooms and a "house-cook." Absolutely no attempt had been made at comfort. The inside board walls were painted a depressing gray. Triangular shelves filled each corner. Newspapers, reports, a couple of torn magazines, and a blotter that had been used to saturation were strewn over a large gray table. Four nondescript chairs completed the furnishings of the living-dining-room. Somehow the overseer reflected the room—and no wonder. Here was a man who hated the solitude that his job entailed and let his surroundings master him, instead of mastering them. I wondered why he stayed in the islands. Probably because he couldn't make a living in Australia.

Hearing him tell his kanaka servant to open a tin of sheep's tongues, my heart sank. In New Guinea you learn the same aversion to tinned sheep's tongues and tinned sausages that we experience as children to cereal and spinach. I blessed the kanaka when he replied: "Mastah, me got pish." He held up a large gray fish freshly caught. So, by the light of a kerosene lamp with a broken chimney and no shade, we ate of a tin of soup, the fish boiled whole, and cocoanut-leavened bread. The meal was as drab as the host and his surroundings, but I was hungry.

We had as another guest for dinner a young Scandinavian called Axel. As a conversationalist, he was an improvement on the uninspired overseer. It seemed that Axel was going to join the *Bonta*, and that we were to drop him on the New Britain coast at Talasea. He had acquired a tract of virgin

land that he was setting out to clear for a cocoanut plantation. It meant years of exile from the white world, years of stark loneliness, which often leads to madness, before he could hope to realize a shilling from his plantation. He didn't look like a pioneer, he looked like a not very healthy shoe-clerk. It seemed sheer lunacy for him to attempt the colossal task ahead of him.

He was taking three native boys and two marys with him into the bush. Out where he was going there would not be even a shelter for himself and his servants until they built it. It was in that section, too, that a few months before there had been wholesale murder of a white exploration party—a "pay-back" murder. Some of the offending natives had been captured and were in jail in Rabaul, but a number of others were still at large. I looked at this slender youth of twenty or so with much respect. If he had misgivings, he successfully concealed them.

It was clear white moonlight when a boy announced that the cargo was loaded, and we returned to the schooner. The foredeck was crowded. There were a number of bags of copra and an amazing assortment of household furniture which Axel was taking into the jungle with him. In addition, there were his three boys, two marys, and two brown pickaninnies, a couple of dogs, a white cockatoo, a flock of chickens, and several cases of tinned foods. One of the marys was obviously Axel's own. She was a bright-eyed wench, and pretty. Watson told me that she was being loaned to me for the passage, and that she would sleep in the vacant bunk in my cabin. While I was not averse to having her, I strongly suspected that her master had been solicitous of me because he wanted to know that she was not philandering about with the crew when he wasn't watching her.

The *Bonta's* engine started up again, making the boat shiver incessantly. Sitting out there alone on the absurd little deck, undeniably lonesome for Rabaul and its associations but nevertheless conscious that it was a very good and blessed world where trade winds blew so softly, and where one might follow a path of moonlight out to strange islands, I had a surprise. Over the top of the cabin, which formed a sort of upper deck, leaned the head and shoulders of Skipper Watson. He asked me if he might come down and sit with me for a while, and I replied, "You bet!" So he flung a leg over the cabin and slid down.

Once in a great while you see a man who is completely in his environment; on this little, cramped schooner, where he was nevertheless as free as the restless trades, this man was happy and transformed. It was not altogether the moonlight that softened the lines in his face as he pulled contentedly at his pipe. He seated himself precariously on the narrow edge that ran around the deck, his legs stretched out along it. In the two hours that followed I caught a glimpse of a strangely attractive personality.

Of his private career I learned nothing, nor tried to, but I found that he had been out among the Pacific islands for many years, moving from one group to another as the fancy struck him. He made a very fair living, carrying cargoes from place to place on the *Bonta*. He hated Rabaul with the heartiness that seemed to be the rule with men who lived, or had lived, there; though they all returned to it eventually. He said that the only place he wanted to be was on his schooner. I found him possessed not of culture, but of a naturally refined intellect, and of shrewd wisdom born of profitable experience. He told me of the finding of the native boy, Baby, and admitted his fondness for him. And both

Watson and I had a great desire in common—to go up the Sepik River.

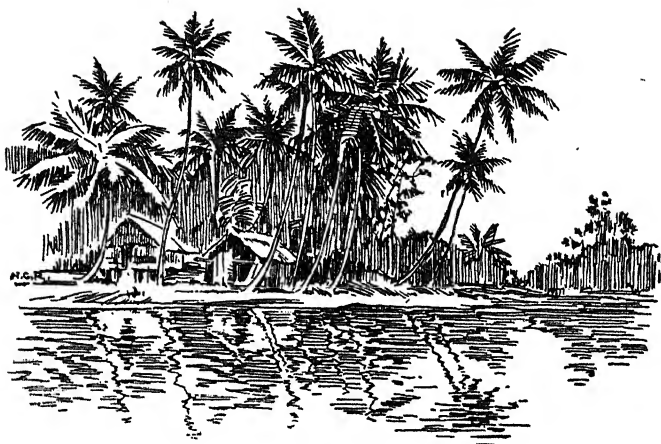
I admit that I was somewhat flattered at the skipper's attitude toward his merely suffered female passenger. My altogether unpremeditated acquirement of his interest and tolerance struck me as something to be proud of. I well knew that the synthetic personality of all the feminine charms of the ages wouldn't have fluttered a pulse-beat of that odd nomad, and I reflected that I should like to hang on to this rare and passionless friendship which seemed to be germinating.

While I was reflecting thus, suddenly the schooner began to rock, and it wouldn't stop rocking. It got worse steadily. We were beginning to round Gazelle Peninsula. I made a brave attempt to appear unconscious of a growing indisposition—there is no sterner pride than that of a person fighting seasickness. The *Bonta* was rocking relentlessly, and the little deck was shipping water. At a sudden devastating lurch Watson grabbed me just in time to prevent my going headlong into the sea, for I was nearly helpless with a swift and terrible nausea. Seasick . . . on boiled fish! It was ignominious, but I couldn't help it. Bill Watson circled my waist with his arms while I heaved Jonah up and over the schooner's side.

The schooner rocked on as though demon-possessed. "Never mind," said the skipper, "lots of folks get seasick around the Peninsula." Stepping down into the cabin, he brought me back a drink of brandy. The sea was as placid now as a lake. I rested my head against the cabin and let a blessed trade breeze revive me. Watson, assured that I was on the mend, said good night, advising me to go to bed and to sleep.

Revived somewhat, I turned to the cabin. It was very late. Axel's little mary was asleep on the unmattressed bunk. By the light of the swinging hurricane lamp I carefully examined my own bunk for the small red cockroaches that I had not yet ceased to fear; but I found none, and decided that they were all under the cover of the pantry cupboard. I tried to extinguish the hurricane lamp, failed, and set it outside. Once in the uncompromisingly hard bunk, I encountered an altogether unexpected and absurd anguish; the schooner vibrated . . . vibrated . . . from its motor, with a constant shivering that set my nose to itching. No matter how I lay, or how much I rubbed my nose, the terrible itching stayed on. I assure you there was nothing amusing about the situation. It was almost morning when I fell asleep from sheer exhaustion.





XI

KAEWIENG

I THINK there can be no more beautiful sight in the world than I beheld the next morning. We were idling along the New Ireland coast. Brooding mountains seemed to rise sheer from the water's edge. All about us the water was green, green as jade; and though fathoms deep, it was transparent. We were approaching Kalili Plantation, one of the largest in the territory. This now belongs to the Melanesia Company, and is their number one plantation, producing an enormous lot of copra each year.

At Kalili there is a natural harbor of dreamy loveliness. From the schooner's side I could see the sunlight dapple the white sand many fathoms below; magnificent coral formations made a vivid submarine museum through translucent depths. Shoals of little jade and turquoise fish darted in and out among the coral reefs. A pure white sand beach ran down from the plantation's edge. A long bridge extended from the shore to make a convenient anchorage for schooners. On this waited three white men to greet us.

We breezed up to the wharf in style, for from some obscure corner of the boat one of the crew had rescued a new Union Jack, and had run it up, with the result that the plantation manager assumed we were the D.O. making an unaccustomed round. It isn't very often that Kalili gets visitors, for New Ireland is sparsely settled. Every now and then, by charter, the old *Durour* stops by to lift copra; but the three white men stationed there as overseers of several hundred natives are virtual prisoners for the time of their contract.

We were greeted enthusiastically, Watson, Axel, and myself. The overseers urged the skipper to spend the day with them. Gloriously untrammelled by a hurrying schedule, he consented. We had brought some mail and supplies from Rabaul—the first for them in weeks—which doubled our welcome.

Round grass huts skirted the shore, and dotted the plantation here and there. These were storehouses and native quarters. Unending rows of tall, thriving cocoanut palms, showing healthy dark-green fronds, went on, it seemed, for miles and miles. Piles of cocoanuts lay heaped at orderly intervals. Natives stood about eyeing us with the excitement that a new arrival always inspires. Two of the white men were Australians, one of them young and very good-looking.

The third was a Dutchman, I discovered, who was leaving the islands shortly. He had been waiting two or three weeks for a schooner to come and take him back into the world; he had thought that ours was it, and his eyes had brightened as we tied up to the bridge. He was a tall, gaunt young man, with yellow, lackluster hair. His blue eyes were melancholy; more than melancholy—they looked lonesome, and homesick, and frightened. You could see that he hated this heavenly place, and hated the irresponsible kanakas, hated

even the white men who shared his exile. And they, in turn, had given up trying to be cheerful with him. The Hollander had been out here for two years, and was fed up. He disappeared directly after meeting us, and didn't show up again all day.

An old Ford lorry drove us almost half a mile to the plantation house. It was a big bungalow, bare but comfortable and cool. I looked with much interest at my two hosts. The older man had an unpleasant reputation for cruelty to natives; in fact, he had once been severely fined. All of which didn't make him feel more fraternally disposed to the few hundred savages under his control. Whatever he was to natives, he was a pleasant host. The younger man I also knew of, as one of the most popular men in the islands. Here again I saw a man perfectly in tune with his surroundings. His was largely the clerical end of managing the vast plantation, and also he was a liklik doctor, that is, a sort of doctor. His name was Ian, and I liked his pleasant, keen eyes, his cheerful authority, and his manner of making us feel at home.

Moreover, I was myself in need of professional services. As if the anguish of an itching nose throughout the night wasn't enough, I had waked up with one of my little fingers beginning to swell. Unfortunately I wore a ring on that finger, and had neglected to remove it until the possibility of doing so was past. The finger had swollen until the ring cut deep into the flesh. My arm throbbed like a toothache by the time I reached the bungalow.

Without delay Ian went to work on it, comfortably mixing sympathy with skill, and for half an hour he kept my hand soaking in near-boiling water and boric solution, until gradually the pain ceased and the swelling somewhat subsided. But it was two days before I could get the ring off.

In the meantime, Watson and Axel and the senior overseer gathered around the veranda table with us, and we gave what news there was of the New Guinea world, which is Rabaul, plus what little news we knew ourselves of the world at large. You see, in the Pacific islands a radio set is virtually useless. Marx, in Rabaul, tried an agency for radio, but the best results were unintelligible. So the isolated plantations do not yet know the blessing of a receiving set.

Looking about, I saw a few tattered novels, obviously much read and re-read; also there were a dozen-odd magazines, years old some of them and worn out of their covers. The two men asked us if we had anything to read on board the schooner. They said they knew even the advertisements of their scattered magazines by heart. So before we left, Bill Watson sent a kanaka down to the *Bonta* for an armful of periodicals, old and recent, which he himself had collected from time to time. A white sail on the horizon looked little better to Crusoe than did this humble contribution to two lonely men starving for the potent printed word.

It was a lovely, languorous day at Kalili, one of those days that leave a sun-splash on your memory. A very gay and elaborate luncheon was served up, with Ian presiding, eager that every one should be filled to the brim. There was a newly slain pig, taro, the unfailing first course of hot soup, bananas, cocoanut-leavened bread, five-corners, which is a kind of fruit, lime juice and water, and beer. The house-boy had planted a large bouquet in the center of the table, and decorated the cloth with blossoms; a punkah swayed gently overhead. Skipper Watson, cleaned up and shaved and content after a warm shower-bath, puffed at his pipe and looked little like the morose man at Ah Chee's. Only Axel was a

trifle restless; it occurred to me that he was worried about his mary, and doubtless not without cause.

The drinking water, when it was served, was cold and sweet—almost as if it had been chilled. I remarked upon this, and Ian said it came from the river behind the plantation, offering to show me it later if I felt inclined.

A siesta for every one after the meal was indicated. Each of us dragged a chair or wicker couch to some breeze-swept corner. The humid sweetness of the tropic afternoon came up from the earth. Shattering the stillness, a palm frond dropped with a sizable crash, and the kanakas stopped whatever they were doing to let out a delighted shout. My chaise longue faced what had once been a fenced-in garden, where the wife of the former plantation owner had made a valiant, nostalgic effort at a garden. No one cared about it now, and it was completely unkempt and overgrown. But one straggling rose bush, run wild, still carried bravely on.

Later Ian and I started out for the jungle, to find the turbulent river that gave such delicious water. We broke our way through barbed vines, forced apart the cables of trailing lianas. Mighty trees towered above us, their reaching limbs trailing parasite vines and ropes; antler ferns filled the tree-crotches. We slipped on the wet ground dozens of times, and were up again, muddy and unhurt. Screaming parrots and cockies flew outraged over our heads, scolding at the intrusion upon their sanctuary. The sun just barely penetrated through the cool peace of the jungle. Finally I could hear the river, where it tumbled, daft with freedom. And quite suddenly we were above it.

We were somewhat above the pebbly bank. There were rapids, but the water was not deep. A native in a brilliant

laplap was spear-fishing, but as we crawled down to the river's edge, and exchanged the greeting "Ikh," he disappeared into uninvaded parts. Kanakas seem to be suddenly absorbed into the ether, they disappear so quickly.

On a great stone jutting out into the rapids Ian and I sat for a long time in the midst of the serene jungle, by the happy river. And how he did talk! He had not had company to talk to for months, and heaven only knows when he had last spoken to a girl. Moreover, he loved this jungle country, even loved its great loneliness. I was alive to its beauty myself, but I saw it even more clearly through his eyes. There are no words to convey the great peace of the jungle. You either love it or hate it, passionately. The throb of the eternal kundus broke the running stillness—only that and the swift sound of the rapids. No breeze moved the foliage; all (except ourselves) that spoke of life were the tiny, gray, darting fish in the still pool behind our rock.

Ian told me about the girl that he was engaged to "down south," and how she did not want to live in the islands.

§

We left Kalili in the sunset. Our crew, back from a day's limlimbo (idling), save for the loading of a few bags of copra, were happy and irrepressible. Each had plaited himself a thick wreath of vines for his head. Garlands hung round their necks, and their well-shaped, lithe hips were girdled with vines. Like young pagan demigods they looked, their slender, half-naked brown bodies in high relief against a coral sky.

We moved slowly out of the lagoon, among tiny coral islands, scattering royal-blue and jade fish in our path, and entered the unrippled madder sea. And two lonely white

men, loath to let us go, waved good-by from the plank wharf. Kanakas shouted gleeful antiphonies of farewell back and forth, the sound echoing in the strange manner of voices over placid water. All this tinted beauty of vast sea and sky we had to ourselves—we handful of human beings—all this benediction of sinking sun and sudden dusk. I leaned my head back to feel the rose light on my eyelids, and said to Bill Watson, "I love it!" And he puffed at his pipe and said, "It's a good life."

And so, drenched in glory, we headed up the New Ireland coast, toward Kaewieng—Skipper Watson and the girl who had been a commuter on the five fifty-five.

§

Kaewieng dapples her white beaches in a jade-green sea. We approached it on a bright Sunday morning, through a swarm of little palm-topped coral islands. Schools of dolphins played around our bow, leaping with superb grace, the sun striking rainbows on their dripping bodies. The sea there is reef-infested, the white coral below the surface coloring the water from Nile-green and cream, where the breakers foam on reefs, to the unbelievable jade of deep water. There is no blue water about Kaewieng. In the atoll-bound harbor little schooners lie very still, their sails incredibly white against the green.

I had no notion as to where I should stay in Kaewieng. I had the letter of introduction to a trader and his wife there, but I didn't want to use it. Independently inclined, I had still to learn of the willing hospitality that belongs to far places.

Bill Watson, after negotiating the business of tying-up at the bridge, seemed to take my shelterless plight to heart. He

said I couldn't stay in the Chinese hotel. Nevertheless, I wanted to investigate it. I had a warm spot in my heart for Chinese hotels, after Ah Chee's. So together we followed the dusty road, sheltered by magnificent German-planted trees, along the white beach, past the native hospital and calaboose, and up the hill, past a dozen comfortable bungalows, and turned suddenly to the left, into Kaewieng's Chinatown.

It is a tiny, effete Chinatown, with little of the noisy fascination of Rabaul's. Unpainted, ramshackle wooden houses lean forward, their doorways sheltered by protruding roofs slanting crazily on unsteady props. Each doorway is a shop, full of cheap knives, laplap cloth, boys' powder (the brilliant coloring that the natives use to streak their faces and dye their hair), shell money strung on fiber cord, cheap watches and trumpery, feather fans, flamboyant kimonos from Hong-kong, tinned bully-beef and salmon, the hundred and one things that traders purvey. The shops themselves are dark and unwholesome, marking the decadence of the once splendid settlement. But the shopkeepers smiled at us pleasantly. A Chinaman in the tropics always looks freshly starched. They shame the average white man, who goes about looking devil-may-care and uncomfortably hot.

For my delight, the skipper and I wandered slowly around the quarter, where the adorable little slant-eyed, flat-faced youngsters played, as happily dirty as in any place in the world. Chinese youngsters are so irresistibly comical when they are very small. Their heads are completely shaven save for a black bang; they wear a nondescript romper-sort of garment, out of which the entire seat has been cut, leaving their little bare buttocks in full view.

The only hotel in Kaewieng was Chinese. It was a long, one-story wooden building, decorated with ornate fretwork,

and painted light-green and yellow. In the heyday of the German colony, when Kaewieng was an important center, the hotel had known gay and prosperous days. But after the war, and with the depressing advent of the Expropriation Board, this died with the energy of the station. It had declined into the last stages of disrepair, and had been avoided by the white people of Kaewieng. So it had been chiefly supported by the Chinese and Malays, by half-castes and such low-brow roughnecks as Bluey Errin.

As we reached it, however, much to Skipper Watson's surprise, it was in the throes of renovation. The Chinese landlord, with as yet unjustified clairvoyance, was making it over with an eye to attracting people of importance, possibly potential travelers on nebulous island tours. Partitions were being ripped out, the bar enlarged, and an electric icebox and its own small electric power plant were being installed. This icebox was the biggest thing that had happened to Kaewieng since the Commonwealth had taken over the Territory. Space in it was to be rented out to the Kaewieng colonists at so much per cubic inch, presumably that they might have fresh meat. The immaculately starched landlord met us smilingly. While he deplored the upset condition of his hostelry, he made us as comfortable as possible in the midst of the debris. Bill Watson suggested that I try a half-port-wine-and-half-lemon-soda. It sounded terrible but tasted great, only it was lukewarm. I think no nation is as addicted to apparently deadly mixtures of drinks as the Australians.

All this was very pleasant, but the fact remained that I was a homeless waif. On our way up to Chinatown, I had seen an empty bungalow which, I reasoned, could be made livable if all else failed.

So we wandered out of Chinatown, along a path strewn

with sweet frangipani blossoms, to see what else there might be of Kaewieng. Despite the beautiful sea and the palm-fringed outlying islands, I sensed general decadence about everything. There was something about Kaewieng that I didn't like, though I couldn't account for the aversion.

The skipper suggested that I might hire a room at the Expro Club, where the few tag-end officers of the Expropriation Board put up. It was here that planters and their wives from outlying islands stayed when they came into Kaewieng on business or for a brief holiday from solitude. To this Bill Watson and I directed our steps.

The club, once a prosperous plantation house, commanded a magnificent view of the water. But, like most else in Kaewieng, it had gone to decay. Watson introduced me to the Malay "steward," and much to my relief he agreed to take me as a boarder. Negotiations finished, the Malay summoned two laplapped boys and ordered: "Go along ship along bridge and fetch 'im ologether something belong missus!" They replied in chorus: "Yessah!" They silently moved away down the road.

It was well on in the afternoon when I finally got around to unpacking. I found to my horror that the chief article of luggage was not there, i. e., the box containing most of my wardrobe. The *Bonta* was probably on its way to New Britain, and the Lord only knew when my stray luggage would be discovered and shipped back to me. The Malay, in accordance with my perturbed request, sang out to a boy to hotfoot it down to the bridge and see if the schooner was still there, and if so to rescue the box. He arrived just as the *Bonta's* engine was beginning to chug and so saved the day. Even in Melanesia one wants to look as presentable as possible—if one is a woman.

I was putting up in Kaewieng much as I had in Rabaul. I had no idea how long I should be there. I had thought that schooners would be available, going out among the islands. But I was all wrong; occasional schooners came and went between Rabaul and Kaewieng, but never touched there on the way to other ports. The island steamer, which stopped about once a month, had just departed. It looked like a month's sojourn.

I cast about hopefully to find what would keep me interested in this beautiful, stagnant outpost of the South Seas. And as I considered the situation I realized how deep my roots had grown into the associations in Rabaul; Dian, Nicki, Dian's atheist husband, who looked quizzically and tolerantly at the world through thick spectacles, and for whom the world carried its tongue in its cheek, kind little Ah Chee, the Germans, I recalled them all with a homesickness that was steadily growing. Kaewieng's beauty oppressed me.

The white settlement consisted of about thirty "Europeans," of whom five were women. Of the thirty, half were a floating population of recruiters, patrol officers, and what remained of the Expro officers. The Expropriation Board was in the process of handing over the last of the former German plantations to new purchasers, and was about to be dissolved.

As the days went by, I saw that these thirty individuals had nothing whatever in common nor tried to find a point of contact. It was appalling! Five women gathered together in the only white settlement on a savage island, and they never so much as left their respective verandas to talk to one another. As in Rabaul, they had become too used to the surrounding beauty to heed it any longer; even Nance Star—to whom I shall come directly—who had lived there for two

years, had never walked along that marvelous white beach so thickly strewn with shells and mother-of-pearl that it looks as if there had been a cloudburst of bonbons. Kaewieng is the worst of the out-stations for fever, which perhaps accounted for much of the listlessness.

As for the men, boredom could be drowned in beer at the Expro Club. And it was. Boredom and ambition, and any other emotions that had no outlet in this far-flung, enervating, fever-infested place.

Bill Watson had introduced me to Dan Star, who was attached to one of the trading headquarters near the beach. Star was an extraordinarily handsome young man, with predatory eyes. He had once, obviously, had a magnificent physique, but already (he was not yet thirty) he was getting soft and fat. His hands were long and beautiful.

A few days after my arrival, Dan sought me out to say that his wife was not feeling well, and would I accompany him up to meet her. The Star bungalow was close by; it belonged to the trading company. It was a beautiful bungalow, on top of a rise, overlooking the wonderful harbor. As we mounted the veranda, an extraordinarily fragile woman rose from a be-pillowed chaise longue. Though she was still young, she looked years older than her husband. She was just recovering from an attack of malaria, but she managed a wan smile of greeting. She looked so ill that I was embarrassed at my intrusion. In her eyes was a hunger for companionship. My own healthiness seemed almost brutal beside her fragileness.

As the days went by Nance Star and I got along famously, although it was a strange friendship that rarely hurdled a certain reticence. She was filled with malaria. But, worse than that, she was unhappy. Dan Star was an attractive man, an

easy master, and an affectionate husband when he was sober. When he was not sober he was extremely difficult. And too often he was not sober. . . .

And yet there would be very happy days, when Dan Star, humble and contrite, would hover about waiting to be forgiven. His wife, aching for tenderness, would open her arms and heart to him, and life would again, on the surface, be a serenely flowing affair. And the man would be so winning that I would like him again. At such times, catching each other's glance, Dan would look cheerfully embarrassed, evidently reading that I had not the slightest faith in his new rôle of regenerate and protector of weak women. But I was relieved that he was at least attempting the part.

Strangely, these devastating hurricanes and succeeding calms in the lives of the three of us out there did not make for strained relations, despite the fact that I was a stranger dropped from nowhere into their midst. We get that way in tropic surroundings; we take what the day or the hour offers and learn forbearance, because there is nothing else to do; learning, too, somewhat of compassion, because we are suddenly face to face with our own unsuspected frailties.

One day I wandered up to see Fritz, the little chap with the shiny golf clubs who had traveled up from Sydney on the *Marsina* months before. He was stationed at Kaewieng. I found him poring over a ledger on the veranda of his small bungalow. But time had wrought a devastating change in Fritz. His spontaneous cheerfulness was gone; his eyes were no longer clear; his whole get-up looked careless. He was in the early stages, already, of the usual tropical degeneration. The golf bag was nowhere in evidence; it had doubtless gone to the limbo of other misbegotten illusions of the Pacific islands. I left him, feeling sorry, and I seldom saw

him sober thereafter. I seldom saw him at all, for he kept almost entirely to himself.

I soon found out that in New Ireland I should get no help in penetrating into the interior. Going on a patrol was impossible because of my sex. The D.O. was a pleasant man, but he refused to do anything to further my ambition. So I turned my attention to the possibilities around me.

I set out to adventure along the beach. When the tide was out—"dry water"—I could walk on a causeway of coral far out on the reef, where little eddies of cream-colored foam curled about my feet; but at high tide I had to hug the jungled shore, wary of the spent surging of infallibly timed rollers. The beach there is a glorious thing at low tide. Beautiful shells of marvelous shape and gorgeous coloring strew the sand, millions of them: trocus shells, encrusted on the outside but with a wonderful rainbow of mother-of-pearl under the rough surface, and one of the valuable exports of New Guinea; small shells with gay pink or yellow backs rimmed with chocolate color; shells evenly striped in orange and white; spiral shells; oval shells; lovely chambered shells with half a dozen prongs, yellow-backed, and with strawberry-pink lips.

Here, too, in great profusion are odd little hermit crabs that steal anything inhabitable for their abode. The hermit crab dwells most frequently in a sea-shell, regardless of whether it fits him or not. He normally is curled up comfortably inside, but if you take the shell between thumb and forefinger, and whistle gently, he will cautiously emerge, charmed by the sound. Sometimes the tiny claws would grip on my thumb, sending a thrill down my back and making me drop the foolish, harmless little thing. Sometimes I would try to dislodge the emerged spider-like crab, but nine

times out of ten he was as quick as lightning in reverse. Then a whistle would bring him out again.

Hermit crabs vary in size from half an inch to two inches across the back. While they seem to prefer shells for their house, anything that walls them about will suffice. I have seen one in the bowl of a discarded clay pipe. They are whimsically humorous things walking about with their purloined houses on their backs. They give the impression of small and very rowdy street urchins in grown-up clothes.

With most of the little villages along the Kaewieng shore I could never establish even the semblance of friendliness. I would be observed of course as I headed down the beach. Sometimes I would even see pickaninnies playing along the reef, or a boy idling back from a fishing expedition. But when I reached the clearing, with its three or four huts eaved with shaggy grass roofs, there was the empty silence of a dead place. Fires had been quickly extinguished and the ashes scattered, charred bits of taro sacrificed in haste, papaws half consumed, nets spread out to dry, and great logs that were being hollowed into outrigger canoes bore signs of immediate workmanship, but there would not be a living soul in sight. Only the unseen Presence of beady eyes from the close-crowding jungle. Sometimes a cur slinked at the fringe of the jungle, long tail between his legs, teeth bared, growling at the interloper. And ten minutes after I had resumed my saunter down the beach, I would look back and see half a dozen naked pickaninnies frolicking in the seafoam.

Kaewieng is notoriously dangerous because of malaria. That I escaped fever there certainly should have been due to Jolam, my boy. He seemed to have taken a fancy to me, doubtless because I gave him an occasional cigarette. One morning upon looking out at the orange tree close to my pane-

less casement, I saw that it was strangely ornamented. Curious objects hung from the flowering branches—an empty pill-bottle, half a cocoanut shell, a tin can, a piece of laplap, a long pointed yellow leaf, and a small stone dangling from a discarded typewriter ribbon. Though I knew that it was a tambaran (devil-chaser) of some sort, I inquired of Jolam: "Along what name this fella tambaran?" Jolam, upon learning that I was occupying that rear room, had taken pains to secure it against the fever-devil by hanging all these potent tamarans close by.

Time was when Kaewieng was not the canker-eaten, run-down settlement that it has become. Two magnificent houses, with the ghosts of formal gardens and the broken ruins of coral stairs leading up great terraces, bear silent and dejected testimony to the time when this place had been well-kept and prosperous, the time when Boluminski, the Kaiser's vicar, ruled New Ireland as a supreme despot, a veritable king of a South Pacific Island.

In fact, over New Ireland still hovers the shadow of that iron man, a ghost who must storm about in fury at the sight of the degeneration of the so beautiful colony which he loved and nurtured. Boluminski has become a legend among both white colonists and the natives, who respected and feared him as they have no white man since. He was a Junker from East Prussia, bred in the German military atmosphere, a personal friend of the Kaiser. After Germany took over the administration of these New Guinea colonies from the German New Guinea Company that was maladministering them, Boluminski was given New Ireland to govern. He was merciless, just, and inflexible in discipline; he marvelously understood the needs of the Stone-Age people under his despotism. He was an empire-builder of the first water, whose name, if his des-

tiny had not been grievously aborted, would probably have rivaled that of Cecil Rhodes.

So he had built for himself a palace-bungalow, overlooking the myriad atolls, high on an upland that slopes down to the jade water. Along the mile-long beach road, sheltered by wide trees of German planting, walked his subjects, literally at his feet. His gardens were famous throughout the islands. Paths were bordered by coral or rainbow-hearted green-snail. The terraces had once been ecstatic with color. Native flowers mingled perfume with tenderly fostered roses and other European plants; cascades of orchids tumbled from trees; frangipani sent its drift of paradise down days and nights. Boluminski was proud of these terraced gardens, wrested from the jungle wilderness; and when a native village was to be punished for offense, the men were commandeered to work for months at a time among his flowers.

The ghost of it all is there yet, now wild and unkempt. But the frangipani trees still drop white-and-gold blossoms along mother-of-pearl bordered paths, cumquat trees still bear sweet white blossoms and little golden fruit, hibiscus and purple bougainvillea still flaunt their gaudy beauty.

As for the house itself, it stands looking into the flamingo sunset with, seemingly, some of the heartbreak that would have been its iron master's had he lived to see the day of forced relinquishment. Nearly all of the massive Teutonic furnishings are gone, much of it stolen. This has happened to most of the houses of expropriated German planters. The huge verandas and great rooms are bare. At the rear, the wide circular drive still lends an impressive formality, though nowadays a genial Australian D.O. and his young wife live in the forlorn emptiness of three rooms and the veranda of past magnificence.

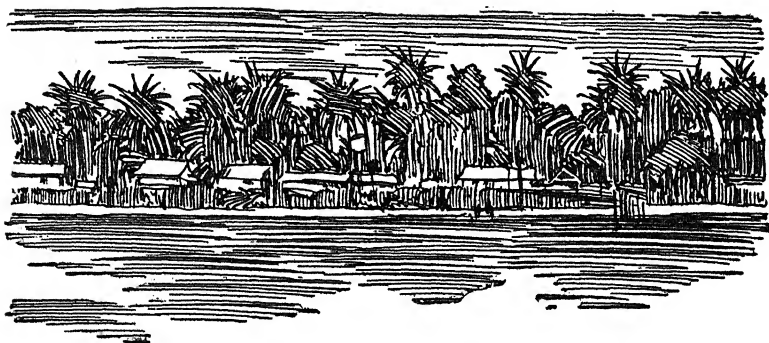
Boluminski had high plans for New Ireland. Here his word was law and the only law. Despite the fact that New Ireland was part of the German South Sea Colonies, he was responsible only to the All Highest back in Germany. It was Boluminski who caused to be built the 140-mile road from Kaewiang to Namatanai, linking the great plantations and transversing the island. He built this by forced labor; the road, now in sad repair, is constructed from pounded coral-lime, which wears into the smoothness and durability of concrete.

The native villages along Boluminski's Road were responsible for the upkeep of it, each village allotted a certain portion to attend to. It is told that whenever he came to a badly kept section of the road, he would summon to him the men of the village responsible for it, and compel them to take out his horses and carry him in his carriage on long poles for the length of the bad portion and back again.

One day early in 1913 Boluminski was thrown from his horse, and his head was injured. In April of that year he suffered a sunstroke. He died shortly afterward.

His grave is in a quiet, bosky spot, bordered by a luluai's village of woven-palm houses. The monument is perfectly fitted to the man: it is a tall, oval-topped slab of concrete upon which in huge, rough letters, filled in with molten bronze, is inscribed, simply, BOLUMINSKI.





XII

SOUTH PACIFIC WEDDING

ONE day the deadly monotony of Kaewieng was stirred by a ripple of excitement. There was a new arrival on the *Corola*, when that little schooner chugged in from a trip to an expropriated island plantation.

It was Daphne, and she was coming to Kaewieng to be married. We knew, of course, that Daphne was eventually going to be married, because her big, good-tempered lover in our midst was mooning the days and lovely fragrant nights away. But they had not expected to be married before the new year, and this was September.

Daphne belonged to the islands. Her father had skippered a schooner for a quarter-century in Melanesian waters; he had traded in kanakas, pearl-shell, copra, pearls, and bêche-de-mer, and had traded wisely, so that his wild young daughter would have a sizable dowry. She had grown up like a little amphibian, with no more fear of sharks and pukh-pukhs in that treacherous green water than the kanakas themselves. Her life had been spent between her father's New Britain plantation, his schooner, and brief, unhappily restricted periods with inhibited aunts in Brisbane.

By the time she was nineteen her name had been linked with a dozen adventurers, ephemeral government servants, planters, and other male wanderers who crossed her care-free path. But she had given never a serious thought to any of them—until she met Hank. As I say, he was big, good-looking, good-humored, and possessive, and steadier than most. She had toppled head over heels in love with him, and he with her. Then the copra firm that he worked for transferred him to Kaewieng. If you are in love, and separated from the object of your desire, Kaewieng is a heartrending place to be. Its beauty is an affront.

They had become engaged, Hank doing himself proud with a large ring composed of a cluster of undeniably real, but minute, diamonds, imported specially on the *Marsina*. In Rabaul I had heard of Daphne, but she herself had been down in Sydney at the time buying a trousseau. And now, after visiting on a plantation, she was coming to New Ireland to relieve that restless Hank. She and her mary were to take possession of his bungalow down the road from us, and he was transferred to a back room of his store.

Daphne came, with short hair the color of honey, eyes as blue as larkspur, and a joyous, nineteen-year-old heart. She was inclined to plumpness, which she deplored but couldn't remedy, and big Hank adored her. Nance and I were at the bridge to greet her, and thereafter were friends. She talked pidgin like a kanaka, and, best of all, she had energy to walk along the beach and out to a cave teathed with stalagmites and stalactites where the fathoms-deep water was cold enough to frost a cup.

So we planned for her wedding, sewed on her trousseau, and knew a rebirth of interest. As she was not a Catholic, the only alternative left for a church wedding was that of the

missionary out at Ulu. He was the second most unpopular missionary in the territory.

We decided it must be a bang-up wedding. Our resources were limited, but this bred ingenuity. There was a wedding feast such as the islands had rarely seen; and at this psychological time the ice-plant at the Chinese hotel was put into running order. The space in it that was rented out to colonists was originally intended for the purpose of keeping meat, so that pig and goat need not be eaten freshly killed; but the space was ultimately used almost exclusively for beer.

Therefore, second only in interest to the bride, was the fact that we were to have jelly desserts at her wedding feast. O ye with jaded appetites, go out to obscure islands of the South Pacific and find what brightens life! The catering we gave over entirely to the Chinese proprietor of the hotel.

The wedding reception was to be at the Star bungalow. The kanaka servants were beside themselves with excitement, because "big fella singsing belong white fella mastah 'e come up." For a week before the wedding-day they were cutting palm fronds for decorations. Magnificent fronds, ceiling-high, arched doorways and framed the veranda; hibiscus, poinciana, bougainvillea, and frangipani were strung in garlands everywhere. Sprays of white orchids drooped from suspended vases; Chinese lanterns gave a carnival air. Daphne, strangely grave for the first time in her life, lounged around, keeping out of our busy way.

And we had reinforcements to our ranks, for the plantation manager and his wife from the island of Lemus, and the family from Tsoi, had come by schooner to Kaewieng, lending eager hands to the biggest local event in many a languorous day.

We must have a wedding-bell. It was indispensable, but

neither Chinatown nor the European trade-stores offered any solution. Maskee! Weren't there a large lampshade and uncounted trees of frangipani? So we did it. We sent a cohort of monkeys (young boys) out to gather frangipani blossoms by the basketfuls. We padded the lampshade with cotton, and strung unending ropes of white-and-gold flowers, winding these spirally about the embryo wedding-bell, until the marvel was achieved.

I doubt that ever a wedding-feast was prepared under fairer auspices. It was nearing the end of the gentle sou'east monsoons, and if anywhere there is a physical paradise it is among the jade-pillowed islands of Melanesia. Dreamy sweetness of blossoms crept up to us, the sunbeams danced a mad ballet between the atolls, and of nights a waxing moon fared forth over the horizon.

My job had been the typing of the invitations. They were on deceptively folded tablet paper, were worded with extreme formality, and were dispatched even to far plantations by kanaka messenger. Three or four went far down the coast by outrigger canoes.

The wedding-feast was set on the rear veranda, where long tables had been constructed; its munificence called forth from the kanakas the single admiring expression: "God-dam!" High piles of cold roast cockeroo, plates of sausage rolls in *vol-au-vent*, heaps of salted galip nuts, tasting like rarely delicate almonds, rice cakes, and bowls of macédoine of fruit. This last was the precious jelly dessert. It was, alas, placed on view all too soon, for by the time we were ready to luxuriate in it, it was reduced to a runny lake of fruit. And the wedding-cakes! Not one but a dozen, white-frosted and decorated lavishly with purple bougainvillea blossoms. The Chinese caterer, let loose, had done a noble job.

Cases of champagne stood about, ready for a royal celebration.

The afternoon closed. It was time to robe the bride. Yards of tulle that she had brought from Sydney we had sewed together for a filmy veil. Her frock was white chiffon embroidered in gold threads. From a cumquat tree we gathered some sprays of waxy white blossoms, and Nance fitted the tulle veil closely about the yellow head. We made a wreath of the blossoms, and put a great spray of white orchids in her arms, and then stood back to look with satisfaction at our handiwork. In the light of two oil-lamps stood a lovely girl smilingly reflected in the long mirror—a white-and-gold bride, with sun-spun hair escaping from a misty cap. She would soon be caught in this web of the tropics, bound irrevocably, never to escape! Ah well!

Time to go to Ulu, to the church! There were three motor cars in Kaewieng; half a dozen of us piled into the first, and the second also took a full cargo. The cars were to make trips back and forth until the forty-odd persons were transported to the ceremony. The bride and Nance, who attended her, and the elderly planter from twenty miles down the Boluminski Road, who was to give her away, were to be the last.

We arrived at the mission church at Ulu. It was a small frame building with a dirt floor, which had been strewn for the occasion with palm fronds. Hurricane lamps swung against the wall gave a dim light; at the far end was an improvised altar where two candles flickered in bottle-necks. A white tissue-paper bell hung over the altar. A group of thirty half-naked kanakas stood in a corner—the choir! With us arrived the groom; and upon our arrival a tropical storm broke—one of those sudden deluging downpours that come

without warning, making travel of any sort impossible.

There were no chairs in the church. We waited for the bride, while the groom stood at the altar with the missionary. The little church grew oppressively hot . . . and the cloying, nauseating odor of sweating kanakas began to penetrate the atmosphere. There is no describing this odor, it is as peculiar to the kanaka as dog odor is to dogs, and it lingers in your nostrils long after you again inhale fresh air.

We waited for an hour. At last a motor arrived at the door, bringing the rest of the bridal party, and the bride stepped in from the torrent outside, not too much the worse for wear. At a signal from the missionary's wife thirty resonant, high-pitched voices took up, in their native dialect, an ancient hymn. South Pacific voices have a curious timbre, penetrating and cutting silence keenly, blending superbly into harmonies. There was never a stranger wedding march than that chorus provided, with its obbligato of flickering hurricane lamps and beating of tropical rain. Hank, sweltering near the candles, his white mess-jacket soaked with perspiration, and his unaccustomed collar a limp rag, registered more comic relief than tender passion as his bride stepped down the palm-strewn path to meet him.

The missionary felt impressive, although he reached just short of Hank's shoulder. He began, "Dearly beloved" . . . and we all heaved a sigh of relief, for the heat and kanaka odor were fast becoming intolerable. The service went smoothly until the missionary asked Daphne if she took this man to be her lawful wife, to which strange question she gave no answer. No one prompted him, and there was an embarrassed silence. Then he asked the proper question, and all was well. The knot was tied. We were ready to make as quick

an exit as possible, when without warning the little missionary launched forth on an exhortation to the wedded pair. He resorted to some ancient passages of the Bible that none of us had ever heard of. He would probably never get another chance like this to hold the floor among white men, so he made the best of it. The greater part of the admonition concerned the duty of wives, the burden of it being that pretty Daphne should put aside outward adornment now that she had got her man, and should soberly plait her hair (Daphne's brief, sunny locks!) and should address her husband as "Lord." This may have lasted only ten minutes, but it seemed ten hours, and the candles burned to a sputtering finale.

The tropical storm was over. Back at the bungalow all was set for the wedding-feast. The wedding had done more than unite two moon-struck lovers, it had brought the entire white population of Kaewieng out of their listless haunts, creating a conviviality that lasted as long as I was there to observe it, and doubtless much longer.

Champagne corks were popping; the gramophone was grinding out hits from American musical comedies; tipsiness was beginning to show itself among the men.

At length, footsore, I sank down in a big wicker chair, next to an old man who was watching the goings-on with much interest. He leaned over to me—he was a little the worse for a mixture of beer and champagne—and volunteered, "I'm Cap'n Corlie, ma'am." I forgot my fatigue, for here was a redoubtable South Pacific worthy. He looked his weather-beaten seventy-two. I heard how he had got wind, on his remote island plantation, that Daphne was to be married, and he being a one-time associate of her old man had decided to

come into Kaewieng to the wedding. Corlie hadn't been off his island for ten years. Schooners or the battered little *Durour* took him his supplies.

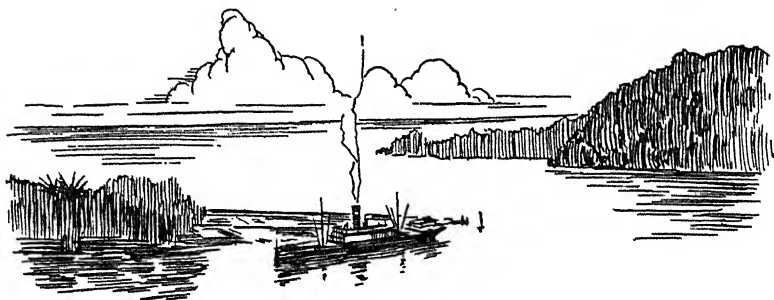
Cap'n Corlie, once a blackbirder and pearl trader, had retired from the white man's world to Melanesia. He hadn't owned a coat or a pair of shoes for these many years. But he had come over in his pinnace and put himself in the hands of the bloods of Kaewieng, who were to turn him out properly for the event. They had loaned him what could not be otherwise supplied. A celluloid collar encased his rebelling old neck, fronted by a red bow-tie on an elastic. White duck trousers, a yellow store-coat, and a coarse white shirt completed the main part of his attire; but on his poor, resisting feet were patent leather "court shoes" (dancing pumps) and white cotton socks. And he was immensely proud of himself!

I wanted to yarn with Corlie, for he was a rare find in Kaewieng, but the time wasn't right; he was upset by the unwonted gaiety, and foggy with liquor. He would try to talk, eager to recall the old days; and then the poor old brain would cloud, and some one would hand him another glass.

But alas for Cap'n Corlie! Not feeling very well, he wandered off the veranda, and apparently lost himself among the shrubbery and the maze of concrete piles on which the bungalow was built. After tacking around underneath the house for a bit, he anchored on the ground beneath the railing, sitting miserably with his head in his bony hands. Another merrymaker, the worse for mixing his drinks, made blindly for the rail, and over it relieved his tortured stomach. Poor Cap'n Corlie, and him dressed up so fine! It took gallons of water to make him fit for his own company again, and his wedding clothes, including court shoes, died a horrible death. The next morning he set sail for his island,

leaving with all dispatch the temptations and penalties of civilized society. But he had paid his respects to an old friend's daughter.

A week later, the *Montoro*, the alternate island steamer out of Sydney, pulled into Kaewieng's harbor. With real regret I said good-by to Nance. She was having a bad time because of fever; Dan was getting thoroughly fed up with South Pacific existence, and yet was becoming rapidly unfitted for any other life. I can see the frail girl—girl still, though aging pitifully in the grip of the tropics—I can see her leaning over the figure of Dan down with malaria, bathing his head gently, while he shook with an ague. She was happy because he was helpless and in need of her, and because he was grateful for her ministrations.



XIII

SHADOW-BEARERS

THE *Montoro* was full, for she was stopping at Salamaua Beach, and, as ever, men were being lured there from many parts of the world by the potent call of Gold. It was good to get among these restless adventurers again. They were jolly and noisy, and they feared nothing, believed in nothing. They came from all strata of society; among them were college graduates and younger sons of distinguished British families. But most of them were roamers whom life could never hold in one place for long; failures, perhaps, economically, whose lives, nevertheless, knew no walls. Ninety percent of them would find failure—they realized that—but a few might strike it rich. Each man hoped to be one of the few.

We left Kaewieng at sunset. Despite its great wealth of physical beauty, I left it without regret. I had felt caught in a net of a terribly monotonous loveliness there, which, instead of bringing harmony and strength of soul and mind, brought a devastating loneliness and mental listlessness. For once in my life I was sick of beauty. I had begun to find the rotten core of the seemingly delectable fruit. What I wanted

was to find the New Guinea that was unspoiled by the touch of the white race.

When I took the *Montoro* I didn't know just where I was going; to be going anywhere at all was enough for me at the moment. I could get off where I liked. Marx of Rabaul had given me a letter to his friend Charlie Meister, who had a plantation at Manus, in the Admiralty Islands, but I rather thought I should go on to Madang, on the coast of the mainland of New Guinea.

The Admiralty Islands lie a few degrees south of the equator, a scattered, jungle-grown group dominated by the large island of Manus. There, at Seeadlerhafen, lie three tiny trading stations, concentration stations for copra. They are Lorengau, Mokareng, and Lumbrum. From the ship no clearing in the dense jungle is noticeable at all, for the island steamer must anchor well out in the lagoon because of reefs.

We steamed slowly into the harbor of Seeadlerhafen, the afternoon after leaving Kaewieng. In these islands apparently all attempts at civilization had ended. As the *Montoro* came to anchor, the water swarmed with spidery outrigger canoes, larger than those around Rabaul or Kaewieng. Most of the outriggers were propelled by marys in bushy grass skirts hung low on their hips, while the brown men stood motionless as statues. One canoe, perhaps a luluai's, contained a skeleton platform whereon squatted an old villain in the midst of papaws, cocoanuts, and green-skinned oranges, while a splendidly proportioned mary bent her strength and paddled against the sea. We were anchored half a mile out from shore.

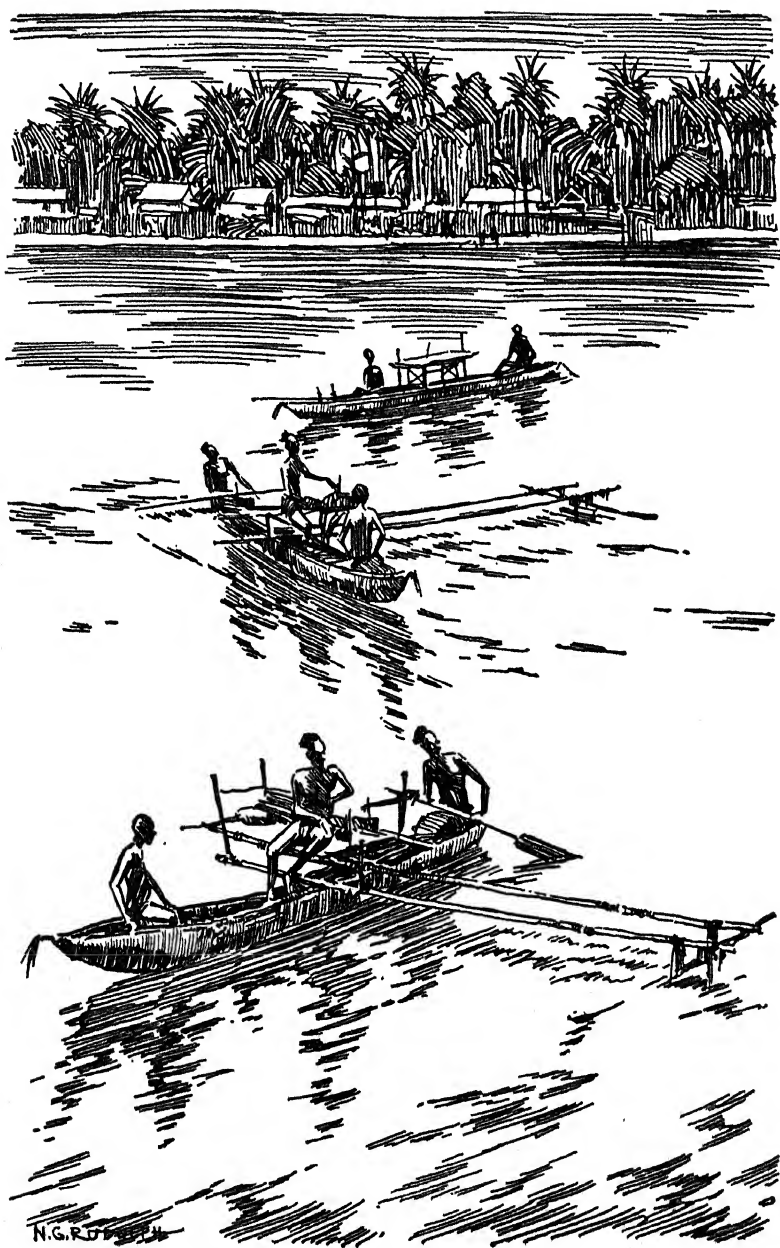
Looking across the water toward this tiny, world-forgotten settlement in the Pacific, I saw the roofs of three dwellings and a few grass-roofed huts resting on stilts rising from the

water, for in Manus there are both mountain and "soda-water" (salt-water) villages. Nothing else was visible that spoke of human habitation, save the swarming, ugly-faced savages who by this time were clambering up the sides of the *Montoro* wherever they could find a ladder or rope. All the rest was dull-green jungle and fringe of cocoanut plantations.

I leaned on the ship's rail considering the situation. Should I remain there and cast my lot for perhaps many weeks—if the monsoons broke early and prevented the island steamer from making the usual six-weekly call—among a dozen resident white people? Once there, with the *Montoro* gone, I should be cut off from even the world of Melanesia for as long as fate and ill weather might see fit to hold me. Suddenly Manus looked very desolate to me, and I felt myself in the grip of a great loneliness. Not homesickness for civilization, but the overwhelming sense of being spiritually and physically infinitesimal in the midst of immensity. I wanted, terribly for a brief space, the comforting presence of some one who understood me well, and whom I cared for . . . Nicki . . . Dian.

Then the sudden passionate wistfulness was as suddenly gone. In a few seconds I had somehow caught a glimpse of what those men endured who found themselves exiled on solitary plantations of sea islands. Small wonder that whiskey is the predominating cargo for stations where lone white men live. The mood was gone, and the reaction was gaiety, but I decided not to be left off at Lorengau. I didn't know that weeks later it would look like a bit of paradise to my storm-racked, fever-racked self.

The white sail of a ketch advanced from the shore—Kramer's schooner. I recalled Kramer as a silent man with



huge protruding ears and exceptionally bad teeth who occasionally joined the Germans at Ah Chee's in Rabaul. Through a technicality he had recently regained possession of his plantation at Lorengau, the technicality being something to the effect that he had established his nationality as Polish instead of German, inasmuch as his birthplace was now part of Poland.

Then a very strange craft put out from shore and headed toward us, this time from a distance up the coast. It was a huge outrigger with a grass hut amidships, manned by six wild, paint-bedecked kanakas. Charley Booth, at my elbow, said, "That'll be Freddy Meister's canoe."

I had heard much of Freddy Meister. For twenty years he had flourished in the islands, originally in the Solomons. His career had been tinged with vermilion—adventurer, plantation overseer, trader, no doubt even blackbirder in the good old days. A German belonging to the early days of the white man in New Guinea, his has been one of the fabulous careers of the South Pacific. In the Solomons, he had known Jack London during the cruise of the *Snark*. Jack Allen of Rabaul, who comraded with them both, tells of a fair and fine fight between the two men upon one occasion.

In the days of his youth, the days when he knew Jack London, Meister had been as untamed a hell-raiser as there was in the archipelago. He could swear blasphemously for a protracted length of time in a manner to command the respect of all. He is a thickset person of medium height with a bull's strength.

A few years ago Freddy Meister underwent a strange change. On a trip back to Germany to see the old folks he fell deeply in love with a frail, clinging little woman, years

younger than himself, who manages the hell-bender with perfect ease. He brought her back to the islands, he rather sheepish in the midst once more of ancient rollicking companions. He bought a large plantation in the Admiraltys, on Manus, where he built for the delicate wife (who stood the rigors of the tropics like one born on the equator) a large and comfortable bungalow surrounded by flowering trees and bushes. And the roughneck adventurer, tamed, settled down into the most exemplary benedict in Melanesia. He also became a prosperous trader and planter.

But there was one incumbrance, and folks wondered how Mrs. Meister would handle the situation. This was Meister's half-caste daughter, Annie, the result of an alliance with a native woman. Meister had kept the child with him always, and seemed very fond of her. But there is little doubt that Annie would have been sent to the mission for half-castes if her stepmother had so willed. Fortunately, the little German woman took a fancy to the child, who stayed on, learning to sew and to paint appalling pictures in oil for her father's bungalow. . . . And now, as we stood on the deck of the *Montoro*, watching the approach of Meister's sea-going canoe, people were surprised at the rumor that the couple were going back to Sydney, intending to embark on a vessel bound for Germany. It was good that I hadn't planned to take advantage of Marx's letter of introduction.

The Meisters boarded the *Montoro* from their outrigger. This was equipped, beneath the grass "cabin," with deck chairs and even an army cot, and had carried them at various times far out among the Pacific islands. Annie was with them. Again I saw the tragedy of the half-caste. She was a tall

young woman of about eighteen, splendidly matured physically, and pretty in a way, though she was unpoised, thick-lipped, inclined to heaviness, and looked more like a mulatto than a half-caste Melanesian. Before her was the forlorn outlook of the Vunipope Mission at Rabaul, where white fathers place their half-caste daughters when at a loss to know what to do with them. For the taking of this entanglement back to Germany was out of the question.

While the question went eagerly about the ship, "Why are the Meisters leaving New Guinea?" the big German talked pleasantly to many acquaintances, and then left the crowd to administer tenderly to his little wife, who was suffering from an infected foot.

The ketch had meanwhile pulled alongside the ship, and Kramer came aboard. When in Rabaul he was always a silent, taciturn man, but here he was a genial, interesting host, eager to take back as many of us as cared to go to his trading station for refreshment and relaxation from the ship's quarters. He was on his own territory, the ruler of brown men and master of his lands, and entirely at his ease.

The trading station at Lorengau sitting back from the beach consisted of a grass-roofed store, behind which there was an exotic garden of frangipani, lemon trees, yellow hibiscus, and giant tree-ferns enclosing a dwelling house made of limbung poles with an overhanging thatched roof. Here on a wide veranda, which served as a living-room, was a museum of precious native curios—things that Kramer and his partner had bartered for for years.

On the veranda we were welcomed graciously by a charming lady. She was still young, very cheerful and up-to-date, and very glad to have us, from the outer world, with her

for even a few hours. She was Mrs. Burrows, the wife of Kramer's partner. They were an odd trio to find tucked away in this jumping-off corner of the world. Mr. Burrows was a distinguished-looking man with iron gray hair and a firm chin, always clad immaculately in starched white linen, who had brought all of the courtesies of civilized life into this jungle home.

He attended to the trade-store in Lorengau. His wife, too, whom he had married and brought out from Australia but two years before I first met them, had determined that none of the gentle things that she had loved all her life should slip into the discard in the islands. Her house servants were spruce and beautifully trained, her garden well-pruned and even-pathed. Every meal in her home—and later I was to have many there—was served as though it belonged to a special occasion. She was one of those women who realize the urgency of clinging to fine things out there. Besides, she was greatly in love with her husband. A woman in love is a radiant and resourceful being.

Kramer, on the other hand, had declined into the way of the tropics. His life had lain out there for so many years before ever a white woman had set foot in the islands. He had lost touch with civilization, lost his need for it. He lived in a native-built shack within the station compound, just as he had lived years before when he had his two native wives. Most of his days and nights, however, were spent on his schooner, manned with savages recruited from the obstreperous tribes of the Admiralty Islands. Kramer attended to the pearl-shell end of the business, and to the native trading stations scattered throughout the island group. His big frame knew not the elegance of starched linen, but only woolen

shirt and comfortable khaki. And yet these three people, living much alone in exile among the notoriously bad tribes of Melanesia, knew a rare sympathy and understanding one for another.

We were at tea—ten of us—regretful that the time was drawing near for the ship's departure. Each of us had been given a souvenir—a native curio or relic. Kramer had bestowed upon me a native grass pulpul (skirt) and a beautiful pair of gold-lip, which latter is the finest of mother-of-pearl that comes from the Admiraltys. Fine specimens of gold lip are as large as dinner plates; inside, they are of a lustrous creamy iridescence fading almost imperceptibly to a radiant gold border around the lip. With the rough outer crust removed and polished into a shimmering rainbow surface, these shells have the beauty of the famous Cellini cup.

I sat talking to Kramer. I had taken quite a fancy to the man who years before had found this lovely spot in a wilderness of savage islands, and had wrested it from jungle and reef for his own. As we talked, a little native lad, clad in neat white rompers—he couldn't have been more than three—sidled along the veranda steps, finger in mouth, and solemnly observed the unwonted gathering. Meanwhile Kramer and I touched upon the unexpected exodus of the Meisters, and upon the daughter, Annie. I protested against the hapless plight of the half-caste, against the selfish thoughtlessness in general of the Europeans who were responsible for these children who were helpless outcasts from both the jungle and the invaders. Kramer smiled at me quizzically, and, nodding toward the woolly-headed boy, replied, unabashed: "There's my youngest."

He seemed sorry that he had for a moment shaken my poise. I looked thoughtfully at the dusky cherub, visualizing

his later youth with its blighted heritage. Too soon there would be within him war between the jungle and the world, with neither promising him happiness or even sympathy. Kramer said: "It is merely the South Pacific, dear lady. I could not bring a white woman into the bush, where I have had to live for so long. But what is a man to do?" I saw his eyes on the boy, and I knew that Kramer loved this little son of his very much.

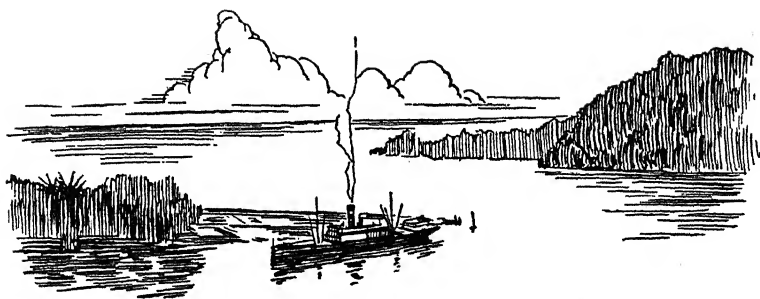
I learned, further, that Kramer's two daughters are at the Vunipope Mission in Rabaul; and that the little mary who was their mother had died when this baby was a year old; and, furthermore, that Kramer was even then trying to get another former wife back from the island of Aua, famous for its beautiful, long-haired women, to which the Government had returned her on the ground that one wife was enough for a white man, even if she were of jungle breed.

The sun was low, and all the world was pink therefrom. Coolness and the peace of the close-hedging jungle enveloped the little station. Lemon blossoms and pale clusters of frangipani exhaled an exquisite fragrance. Along the casuarina-bordered road leading to the jungle's edge walked a bush-native with hair skinned back into a thick brush-like psyche, and clad in a brief loin-cloth; behind him trailed his mary, her grass pulpul swishing with every sway of her hips. Soon, without warning, night would drop, pierced through by the Southern Cross.

We turned toward our ship, following a path, tree-sheltered, to the narrow beach. Toward us came a young kanaka girl with scarlet laplap and with crimson hibiscus behind his ears and in his arm-bands. He idled along the path, playing on a long bamboo flute, plaintively like some slender

dark faun. He paused, stepped aside to let us by, and when we had passed I turned and saw him unconcernedly continue on his way as if there had been no interruption, leaving sad little notes floating above his trail.





XIV

LAND OF MYSTERY

I DECIDED to leave the *Montoro* at Madang, on the mainland of the island of New Guinea, that dark island of dread jungle wilderness and range after range of impenetrable mountains rolling back in purple tiers . . . the Finisterre ranges, "World's End," and well named. As usual, I had no idea where I was to put up; but my ingenuous faith in Providence never failed me for a moment.

And yet I am not quite right either in saying that I arrived in Madang without a handle of any sort. In Rabaul, months before, I had met a young Australian couple who had migrated to Melanesia to make their fortune. The girl had given up much to follow Shorty Long out into the wilderness, and in Rabaul, despite the fact that they were still honeymooners and tremendously in love, I knew that her nerves and courage were at the breaking point.

From an active, successful life "down south" she had been forced into the idleness, gossip, and petty jealousy of the feminine substratum of "society" to which a not particularly important clerk's wife is relegated upon taking up residence in Rabaul. It had looked as if she were there for keeps, for she and Shorty had burned their bridges behind them. I

liked Meg Long; I admired the courage with which she was facing the intellectually and physically devastating life of a white woman in New Guinea. And he was an earnest and well-acting young man, albeit without much imagination.

Anyway, the young Longs and I had taken a shine to each other, and they had urged me, if I ever felt inclined, to spend some time with them.

Now I learned that Shorty had been given the manager-ship of the Madang headquarters of one of the great Anglo-Austral copra and trading firms. There being a wireless station at Madang, I radioed the day before our arrival: "Arriving Montoro can you give me a doss." And left the rest to fate.

Madang, once the capital of the Bismarck Archipelago, has one of the most beautiful harbors in that world of beautiful waters. It is a little Venice of green islands and lagoons. The *Montoro* picked its way slowly among the isles.

So this, for Madang, was Boat Day. The bridge was a reception platform of close to thirty people. Not all belonged to the settlement of Madang; a few recruiters had come in from the hinterland, and two or three planters had come by schooner up the coast, drawn by the ecstatic prospect of iced beer. Many a man will bush-walk three days or more through jungle for nothing more noble than iced beer. There on the bridge, scanning the decks with eyes eagerly anxious to assure me that I was welcome, was the curly head of Meg Long. She spotted me, and her smile and waved hand sent a current of gratefulness through me for this marvelous, never-failing island hospitality.

Pandemonium reigned while the big steamer made fast to the bridge. "Hus-sah!" came from a hundred native throats as lines were thrown and fastened. Greetings called

from wharf to decks. Orders barked in pidgin English from ship's officers. Gangways dropped. And then the stampede of thirsty colonists, the throwing open of the bar. And the steady file of shouting brown heathens with cargo on their shoulders, up and down plank runways from hold to bridge. Good-natured jostling on the decks. Affectionate greetings—"Dear old tin of worms!" and for me, "Hello Miss America! Glad you came our way!" Everybody at the bar shouting everybody else to drinks. Joe, the barroom steward, perspiring mightily, running back and forth at a dog-trot with a burden of icy cold, ruby-red gin slings, frosty beer, shandys, whiskey-and-sodas, cocktails, even champagne despite the fact that it was forenoon.

Luncheon on board was free for all, but the men must wear collars and coats; this a cruel ordeal, for by luncheon-time heads were getting hot and garments were as soaked with perspiration as if their wearers had jumped into the soda-water full rigged. Iced drinks, particularly beer, hit unaccustomed stomachs like T. N. T. And the rule is, among the men, to imbibe as much as natural limitations will allow while cold liquor is available. Who can blame!

At luncheon there is soup made from real bones, fresh (if frozen) meat that one can bite on, curry (as always), crisp salad and lettuce from Sydney, green vegetables and fruit (*not* bananas), celery, and—oh Joy!—for dessert fresh pies, ice cream, and fruit jellies. It's all too good to be true, and everybody is very happy and jolly. The small island steamer is not an out-of-date South Pacific vessel which no Atlantic seaboard would tolerate; she is magnificent, looming like an empress in the quiet lagoon among little lack-paint schooners and native outriggers kowtowing to her, she is a treasure ship holding many things that nostalgic souls in far

exile crave, and she serves them out with royal generosity. Some one should write an epic to the six-weekly island steamer that brings the world to far-flung tropic habitations.

Two husky savages carried my seven pieces of portable luggage from the ship. The *Montoro* lay over for the night, for there was much cargo to be transferred.

It was a gay night on board. So much release of pent-up energy to be squandered during the few short hours! Myself and one recruiter were to be dropped off at Madang, and there were farewells to be properly taken care of. Far across the lagoon the lights of the mission station blinked sleepily, tolerantly, and went out. Close by, flying foxes beat noisily among papaw trees, as if made restless by the noisy whoopee in this normally quiet settlement. Even after the majority of us who belonged ashore had tucked ourselves in beneath mosquito nets, the night was broken occasionally by prodigiously inebriated gentlemen pursuing a jagged course along Madang's one road.

The next morning the *Montoro* departed, trailing streamers of bright carnival paper, as is the way of departing island steamers. Good old *Montoro*! Her luxury was never again for me. Thereafter, in the Pacific, my lot lay humbly and gloriously on free-lancing schooners—the odorous *Marsina* and, when I finally turned me toward Europe, a saffron-colored tramp freighter.

Madang is a pleasant and happy place, a singularly self-respecting, well-mannered place among South Pacific outposts. Meg and I were the only white women at the time in the settlement, not counting the American missionary's wife across the lagoon, whom we rarely saw. Of white men, there were about twenty, including the manager and a clerk or two for the Burns-Philp store, the same for the Melanesia

Company's store, a handful of government clerks, the wireless operator (generically known as Mr. Wireless), the lik-lik doctor attached to the native hospital, a free-lance trader, two or three recruiters biding their time before setting out for the hinterland, and last but not least the district officer.

Moreover, Madang is a sun-drenched, lotus-eating place, and yet somehow in its lazy way it seems busily alert, with none of the gold-minded, profligate, floating population of Rabaul, nor of the hectic, oblivion-seeking wasters of Kae-wieng. Indeed, there is no reason in the world for any one being at Madang at all unless he is there voluntarily and for a purpose. Once it was an important center of Melanesia, and for a while the capital of the German colony, but now half of the German-built bungalows and the once flourishing hotel are decaying ruins, over which purple bougainvillea riots at will, and the foot-paths are choked with scarlet poinsettia. The trade-stores supply the daily needs of the colonists, likewise the outlying plantations along the coast and on islands near and far; they also barter with the natives for copra and pearl-shell. And copra and pearl are concentrated here from outlying plantations, brought by schooner, to be picked up by island steamer and taken to Rabaul. Wild native recruits are brought in from far hinterland mountain villages, and held for transport to Rabaul.

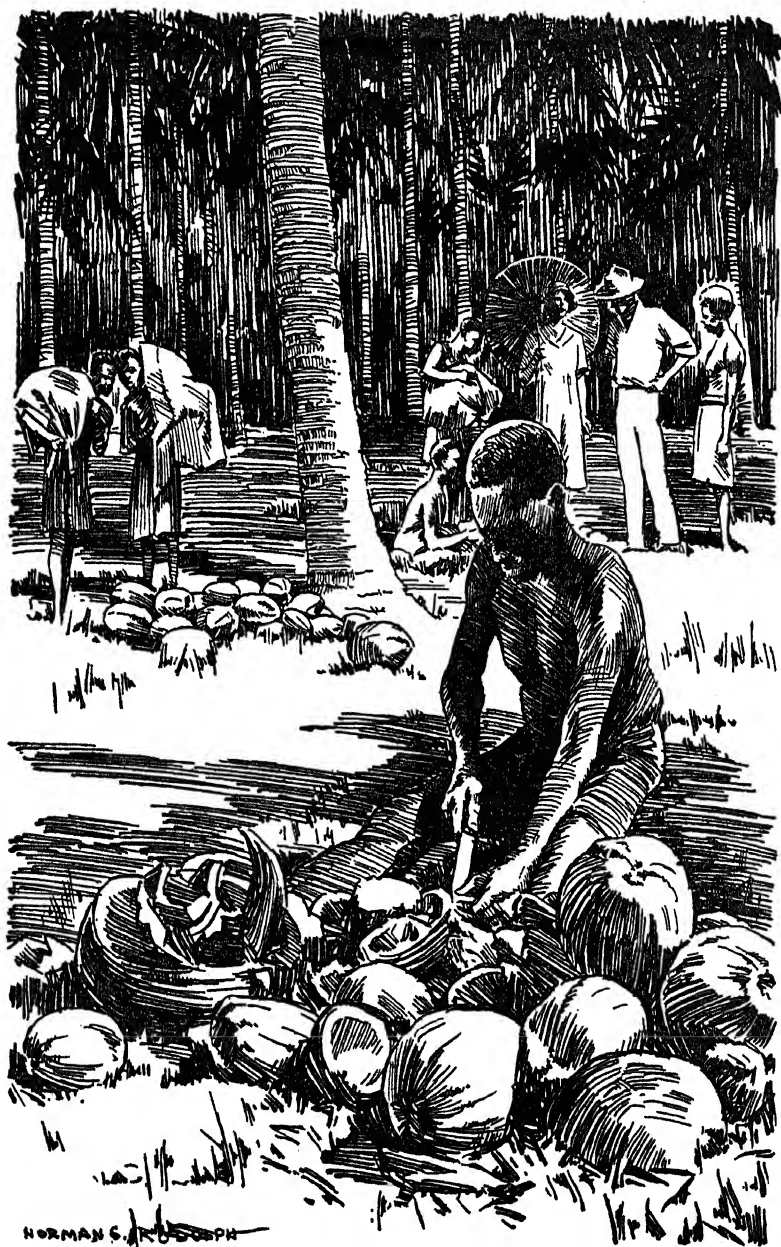
A widish, bumpy road leads from the plank wharf and storehouses past B. P.'s store, past half a dozen red-roofed European bungalows, past the Melanesia store, past a right-angled track leading to Chinatown with its immaculate white-ducked figures, its Nationalist headquarters, and its shoddy little shops. Beyond these it goes on for about an eighth of a mile until it ends abruptly at the stile guarding the entrance to the garden and big bungalow of the district officer (keop).

Here well-ordered gardens and a well-kept tennis court speak silently of "home," which is England. Even to a born Australian who has never been out of Melbourne or Sydney it is always England that is "home"; to Australians in the islands the Commonwealth is merely "down south."

A huge copra plantation stretches around the little settlement, and that in turn is bordered by the goblinessque, fantastic relics of rubber plantations. Then come the foothills of the Finisterre Mountains, reaching, range after range, farther than eye can see. And so I found myself on the fringe of one of the most mysterious, one of the last unpenetrated countries of the world.

My doss was in readiness; it chanced to be the canvas cot that had been occupied by no less a celebrity than the young aviator Ray Parer, he who made that mad and glorious flight in a rickety plane from England to Australia back in 1920. Lowell Thomas has given glowing tribute to Parer as a truly great and fearless airman. Parer's England-to-Australia flight is one of the classic flights of history, though others have received more publicity and reaped considerably greater reward. Ray Parer and a co-pilot, McIntosh, took off from England in a second-hand plane; the flight consumed several months, during which time the two airmen kept body and soul and plane together by exhibitions of stunt flying, and by scattering handbills over the various cities en route. Their flight was fraught with adventure, including forced landings in the middle of the Arabian Desert, on the Delta of the Irrawaddy River, and in the heart of the Malay jungle. They eventually landed at Darwin, Australia, with less than a gallon of petrol in their tank, the airplane held together by bits of wire and string.

Australia gave them a rousing welcome; both Parer and



HORMAN S. RUDOLPH

McIntosh were decorated, and the Prime Minister presented them with a purse of £1000 to defray the expenses of their flight. The plane is now preserved in the Sydney Museum. However, as so often happens, Fame proved a fickle mistress, and before long Parer found himself penniless once more. A fearless airman, a peerless pilot, he knows little else that will earn him a living. Doubtless if it had not been for his own excessive shyness, almost a moroseness, a hero-worshipping Australian public would have reached out a helping hand. But instead of asking favors he apparently simply disappeared from public view. He tramped the pavements of Sydney, job-hunting. For a while he was a hired mechanic in a garage, and, I am told, was fired because he didn't know as much about automobiles, apparently, as about airplanes. Finally he was offered a job as pilot flying a plane from Salamaua Beach up to the gold fields. And there he came into his own, at last, as far as glory was concerned, for the adventurers that frequent Salamaua and Edie Creek recognized the quiet young pilot for what he is. In New Guinea, at any rate, he is a hero. His pilot, McIntosh, later met death in an airplane accident.

I met Parer; our paths barely crossed, for he left Madang on the island steamer that had dropped me there. I had heard much about him, and was surprised to find him at Madang. As a matter of fact, it was by accident that he was there; he had been offered a much more paying job in Papua, where he later opened a new airplane route, and he had started down from Salamaua on the old *Durour* when he was taken very ill with fever, so ill that the skipper of the dilapidated little steamer had feared for him, and had put in at Madang and left him to the care of Meg Long and her husband.

That had been three weeks before we arrived, and it was a wan, fever-ravished young man in his middle twenties that I saw. A very quiet, painfully shy young man who slipped away from people as quickly as he could. Some day, if he is not prematurely killed, he may come into his own. But he is a reckless, fate-taxing pilot, which augurs ill for his career.

And, so to speak, at Madang I stepped into his shoes. My welcome was sincere; Meg and Shorty Long, coming into almost pristine wilderness undefiled by social inanities, had found a rare happiness. Shorty had been motherless since birth, and all his life he had craved a home that actually belonged to him. Now he was like a child who has been given the moon he was longing for, and found it surpassing his hopes.

Meg and Shorty were the most irresponsible of happy-go-lucky couples. Her ventures at housekeeping were like Dora's in "David Copperfield," only Meg never dissolved in tears. We ate when we felt inclined. Except to demand obedience from the native servants, and to forbid betel-chewing, she made little attempt to train them. They served us costumed and wool-bedecked in ludicrously grotesque manner. The kanakas liked to work for Meg. Even in Madang it was hard to get natives to sign on as servants, but there was always a wistful group of heathens sidling around the veranda steps, insinuating that she let them "make paper" with her. Finally, out of sympathy and amusement, she had signed on six house servants for a three-room bungalow.

Meg's keen sense of humor hurdled whatever of discomfort there was for her in the New Guinea out-station. Her cook-boy was a fierce-visaged, hill-village native, middle-aged, and his face, deeply lined from nostrils to mouth, was invariably streaked with a violent pigment. He wore a tight

bead collar, his ear-lobes dangled to his shoulders and were heavy with tambaran wealth, and his wool was a wiry black halo in which a high comb stuck at a slant. A blood-curdling sight was the cook-boy, and no artist at his profession, but he had a kind heart and never balked at our temperamental meal-times.

The lad that waited on us at table was a natural buffoon; he was more than a monkey, but not yet a man grown. His flat feet were pigeon-toed, his silly wide mouth was innocent of half its normal allotment of teeth, a limp red laplap was fastened around his protruding middle, and his ball-shaped wool was festooned with a strip of calico. He would succumb to the giggles while waiting at table, try as he would, hand over mouth, to conquer them. No stern word from his master would help him. No sharp sibilant from the door, where the awe-inspiring figure of the cook-boy might appear to quell the underling, had any effect. The way we dined simply moved the "butler" to giggles, and that was the end of it.

When he brought in a hot platter, instead of setting it down and relieving his tortured fingers, he would blow alternately upon them, balancing the platter precariously, his eyes wide with surprise, while we in chorus enjoined him to put it on the table. He was just dumb, but so naturally, humorously dumb that his unconscious buffoonery livened our meals tremendously. Meg grew so fond of him that she wanted to adopt him—or at least she said she did. The other servants, two monkeys and two marys, were willing slaves, but had little to do. The servants became an embarrassment of riches.

An army cot with a mosquito net on the veranda was

mine for as long as I would stay. The cot looked out over the lagoon, facing the sunrise. The sun would wake me mornings, penetrating my dormant brain, enveloping my body. It is good to be waked up so—to see the still lagoon at sunrise, with the cocoanut palms outleaning as if listening to some enchanted music that I could not hear. With sunrise came the stirring of kanakas and the conversation of their lowered voices, sometimes in pidgin, sometimes in their tribal lingo, betokening a slow-moving activity in the vicinity of the house-cook.

With the sun safely up, one might drowse a bit once more, but not for long. There came an inevitable silent-footed figure, in red laplap and with fresh hibiscus flaming in his wool and armlets, saying ingratiatingly "Tea, Missus?" I loathe morning tea. Hundreds of times I have repeated: "Maskee tea along me along morningtime!" But morning tea (six-thirty) apparently is an inflexible rule implanted in the kanaka brain by the white-fella-mastah, and be the victim ever so sweetly asleep it must be proffered. Sometimes, despairing of escaping the inexorable order of things, I submitted, and sipped unwarily. Ugh! half sugar and half strong tea. No milk ever.

Tea dismissed, or cravenly consumed, and I being by then helplessly awake, the next move is a shower to start off the humid day. So I sing out: "A 'right. Now you can make 'im washwash on top along me." An alert, always amused little monkey has been detailed to make washwash-on-top. He darts to the house-cook for a tea-kettle, heeding with a "yes-sah!" the warning, "Make 'im liklik (a little) hot, dassol!" In his eagerness to be of service, he is quite likely to forget to mix cold water with the contents of the boiling kettle. I

have been casting off supposed necessities of civilization for many months, but I know luxuries when I see them. I revel in the galvanized shower.

For the person who loves the world of the genesis era there is much to delight in at Madang. It is no tag-end of a shoddy European civilization, it has no stupid social ambitions and absurd barriers. At Madang I seemed to leave the world behind. At Madang there is not the vivid, satiating, cloisonné beauty of Kaewieng, that beauty which actually breeds a longing for physical ugliness. Madang has beauty, but it is of a more vigorous kind than Kaewieng's.

I found that in the shadow of Madang's grim and mysterious mountain ranges lay peace and a joy. It seemed that all the handful of "Europeans" found contentment there. And there, as in Rabaul, one heard always the heart-beat of New Guinea—the steady, unceasing jungle drums.

Madang was once a lusty port of call, capital of the German South Sea Colonies. Several times the capital has been moved, in search of a perfect harbor, until now it rests at Rabaul. But there are still eloquent, decaying remains of Madang's past glory. Chiefly, there is the old German Hotel.

One afternoon, when the cocoanut palms cast monstrous long shadows before the sun, we wandered along the tangled path leading to the hotel. What most attracted us was the brilliance flaunted by scarlet hibiscus, head-high poinsettia, and purple bougainvillea, for Meg wanted to decorate her house. We climbed a rising path to this gorgeousness, and there, obscured by the bushes, stood the hotel.

It was a long, low, one-story affair; a futile attempt had been made to board up windows and doorways, but the boards had long since been tampered with by curious *kanakas*. The wide veranda was sagging woefully, its foundations and

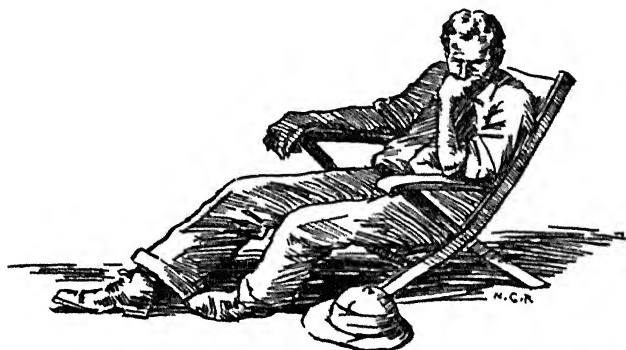
pillars eaten away by white ants and dry-rot. Curiously we peered through windows into the haunted place, and then our concentrated efforts easily pulled away enough boarding to gain us entrance. We entered into the bar-hallway, and could not help exclaiming at the comparative elegance of it. Still intact was a beautifully laid mosaic floor of tiles. Many years had passed since recruiter, trader, planter, and pearl-fisher had drunk each other down with half-gallon steins, yet two cracked steins bearing German legends stood on the counter, portly ghosts of a portly time. Tall doors had opened out upon the veranda once, transforming the room into a pavilion. Our footsteps and voices alarmed a bat clinging to some obscure beam, and it flapped blindly over our heads. We stepped out through our forced entrance, and rounded the veranda; the hill, topped by the hotel, sloped down to a small lagoon, and beyond lay the shining sea. All that remained was neglected and decayed. Bougainvillea ran wild over everything, triumphantly, the bush's challenge to white invaders.

So even out there at the far end of the earth, which the war had not even touched with its hot breath, it had left its aftermath. No need for a hotel now in Madang, with no one to use it. The jungle was taking back what it had lost for a time.

Alone I made long excursions into the vast plantation followed by tiny blue butterflies clustering about my feet. These excursions would frequently carry me, tired and thirsty, to the D. O.'s cool house overlooking one of the unspeakably lovely lagoons around about. There was always a pitcher of tart lime juice and water for refreshment; and if the D. O. himself were not on patrol, I would invariably find him stretched out in a long canvas chair. He provided excellent

company for an hour, while we puffed at cigarettes, and a native pulled sticker burrs out of my stockings and frock.

I liked the D. O. a lot. He was a quiet, bookish man, who had spent many years in New Guinea, and he liked a listener to his fund of knowledge concerning the islands as well as I liked to listen to him. Once I asked him why some not-very-old New Guinea postage stamps that I had just come across



in one of his scrap-books were marked "North West Pacific Islands," which could not be accounted for geographically.

It seems that in December, 1914, the Second Battalion of the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Forces (the Cocoanut Lancers), under command of Col. S. A. Pethebridge, set out under sealed orders. The destination was the Caroline and Marshal islands. After having been at sea for a week the course was altered, for those islands had already been seized by Japan. A supply of Australian postage stamps marked "North West Pacific Islands" was included in the stationery for the use of the Second Battalion, and when the Cocoanut Lancers at length arrived in New Guinea, instead of their original destination, the stamps were put into circulation despite the fact that German New Guinea did not fit the inscription on them. With all the other readjustments

to be made in the course of years, this minor one was neglected, and the "North West Pacific Islands" stamps were used until 1925, when a new design, the present one, inscribed "Territory of New Guinea," was issued.

The D. O., who loved his garden, produced there the miracle of roses. They were rather colorless, scentless, anemic roses, but in New Guinea they were as rare as a blue paradise. In my own United States, where money will buy bunches of roses, I never learned the true value of one. His orchids, a splendid collection of plants, were much less objects of worship, they being no great rarity there.

But I didn't see as much of the D. O. as I should have liked, for in addition to his frequent patrols into the hinterland, he at length was preoccupied with a new arrival in Madang. This was a distinguished-looking, portly man from "down south." Mr. North arrived at Madang on the specially chartered *Durour*, which must have cost him a pretty penny. He wore a well-tailored tweed golf suit, which made the rest of us look rather shabby. He had an air of important business about him. He brought a letter to the district officer, and automatically became his guest. The D. O. led him around to Meg's at once. We gathered that he was interested in a kind of blue clay to be found in a part of New Guinea inland from Madang. More than that he obviously did not wish to reveal. Blue clay meant diamonds, but we pursued the subject no further.

In a day or two Mr. North and the D. O. were starting up the coast by schooner on a patrol. I challenged the D. O. to let me go, too; to my surprise, he replied: "All right, but it will be a hard trip, and you'll have to bring your own equipment." I could see that Mr. North didn't realize that I should be a charming addition to a patrol. In fact, I don't think the man

had any sense of humor at all. I could feel that he registered stern disapproval of the lone woman vagabond in New Guinea. I could well understand, however, that if he was on the trail of diamonds he wouldn't welcome an interloper at his heels, in any case. For a moment I played with the opportunity of going on a patrol with them, and then cast it aside. I didn't have the necessary equipment, and I might have been a drag on the D. O. Twenty miles a day through the jungle is no task to take on lightly.

It was much better, as it turned out, that I stayed behind, for a week later the *Nuloa* came to Madang, bound for the Sepik River and other strange and alluring places. If I had missed the *Nuloa* I should have missed the greatest adventure of my life, so far.

The next day the patrol started. Before leaving, however, the D. O. put his big black horse at my disposal, and thereafter, instead of walking, I rode through the plantation. And that same day I met Jim.



XV

JIM THE MEMORABLE

I THINK that few of the people I met in New Guinea gave me credit for being what I honestly was, that is, a harmless, altogether unmercenary, more or less inhibited young woman endowed with abnormal curiosity. And I don't wonder. I wonder that I found the tolerance I did. It was unusual for a man to wander aimlessly through the islands, but never before had a girl passed that way, going wherever fancy and opportunity took her.

When I started out from Rabaul for unknown destinations, those that were interested in me said I couldn't do it, not alone. A woman simply could not travel alone through New Guinea, they declared. I felt that, given a few good breaks, I could go wherever in the world I wanted to. I had youth, superb health, money to pay my way where money would buy anything, ability to see the amusing side of most situations, and an ardent desire to know every phase of adventure; and my life was my own with responsibility to no one. I'd rather die trying to do what I want to do than live *forever* in monotony. There is no better equipment than that for travel through New Guinea—or any place.

Furthermore, I had learned, what I already suspected,

that men (handled rightly) are far from being the natural enemies of women, even in the rough-and-tumble South Pacific. If it had been a world of women out there—and I've a lot of liking for women individually—I doubt that I should ever have accomplished my adventure.

I found some surprising manifestations of chivalry. Indeed, one chap whom I had met in Rabaul wrote from a lone plantation in the Solomons, to which he had returned, offering a marriage of convenience in order that I might have the protection of his name, he guaranteeing a divorce at the end of the adventure. Not that it was an impassioned proposal, or could possibly have been construed as a tribute to my fascinations. He meant what he said as he said it. It was extremely decent of him—I know a beautiful gesture as well as the next person.

When I say that men were my friends, and that I met with chivalry, I don't mean to throw a cloak of absurd and sentimental virtue over the adventurers, drifters, and moral beach-combers that I came in contact with, and lived among, out there. I am merely trying to explode the theory that the experience of a reasonably interesting girl, among disillusioned, world-buffeted, and frequently codeless men, need be fraught with disaster, or even danger, either physical or spiritual.

We are all human, which is to say animal, and where men and women are thrown into contact with each other, the spark is of course always there and may be fanned into disastrous flame. But one doesn't fan it. Just enough, perhaps, occasionally, to be sure that it exists, that is all. I am sure that in the remotest corner of the world a woman can move in safety, and yet keep the liking and interest of men; it depends upon her.

At any rate, despite the gloomy head-shaking about my finding my way out among the islands, I had got as far as Madang without much difficulty. But the rest, even I could see, wasn't going to be so easy. One thing I wanted above all things to do—to see the country of the Sepik River, the head-hunting country. In New Guinea the Sepik River is a place of mystery into which but few white men have penetrated. Its source, high in the fastness of unexplored mountains, had never been authentically mapped. Except for the schooner *Gabriel*, belonging to Father Kirschbaum, the missionary who has been an exile from the world and has lived among the Sepik tribes for more than twenty years, few schooners had dared the swift current of the "River of Death," as the Sepik is called.

The dangerous river fascinated me as a goal. When I talked about getting up it every one said, "Not a chance!" At that particular period of my wanderings, dismissing an ambition thus airily was a challenge to turn all of my ingenuity toward accomplishment. But at the moment I could merely bide my time and hope for the best. And biding one's time in Madang was easy.

Meanwhile, Jim came along. One day he blew down to Madang from a plantation a hundred and eighty miles up the coast, on a schooner. One of the best, most courageous, and adventurous in the South Pacific, this Jim. Not much to look at, except in length. And his cober, Brearly, was a good sort, too. (Cober is Orstrylian for pal.) Jim, having heard that a lady was harbored in Madang—an unattached one—dropped around to pay his respects to the Longs and see the *rara avis*.

This was of a late afternoon, at tea-time. I saw a lank, very long man, with sandy hair that stuck out Will-Rogers

fashion from beneath his wide-brimmed Stetson, whimsical blue eyes, and a long freckled neck in which an open shirt disclosed a large Adam's apple. He wore his white duck trousers foreignly, as if white ducks were a trying gesture to Society and Ladies. For Jim belonged to khaki shorts, a cartridge belt for the waist, and a rough shirt, as I have him preserved in a photograph. He stood, as we made him welcome, uneasy, with sombrero in his fumbling hands. He looked sheepish, although he was hankering to be sociable, and I took a shine to him. And, happily, so did he to me. Besides, he had exciting news. The *Nuloa* had arrived at Rabaul some days ago, and was on her way to Madang, en route to the Sepik River, and thence out among the farthest islands of the Territory, up to the equator! He had got the low-down from Burns-Philp's manager that day. The Sepik!

For months now Jim and Brearly had been hanging around Madang awaiting some means of getting to the mission station of Marienberg, up the Sepik. The reason was this. He and Brearly were planning to undertake a mad thing. Both of them had been recruiting native labor from the inland villages of the Sepik country; they had virtually all of the vast area of hinterland for themselves. Only those who know from experience can guess the hardships entailed in penetrating through the kunai plains, swamps, alligator-infested rivers, and jungle of that country. But Jim and Brearly had endured it, and had prospered financially in the partnership. It was said that Jim knew the Sepik country and natives better than any living man, except Father Kirschbaum. And he believed that if he and Brearly could take horses, instead of native carriers, into the hinterland, they could work much more effectively.

I had heard of Jim in Rabaul. This was an original idea

of his, taking horses into the hinterland, and every one said he was as crazy as a hatter to attempt such a thing. But Jim and Brearly had already gone through hair-raising experiences together, had faced death in several forms, had traveled down both the Big and Little Ramu rivers on a raft of logs lashed together with lawyer vines, losing in a cataract everything except their lives. They had lived among, and recruited from, the head-hunting tribes of the interior of New Guinea. They had searched, incredulously and unsuccessfully, for the tribe of men with monkey's tails that the natives of the Sepik country insist do exist. They had seen the great possibilities in making money through dealing with the natives of the interior, both by trading and recruiting; and they had found traces of oil in the Sepik valley. The fact that people were calling them mad for this latest enterprise bothered them not in the least.

A few months before, Jim and Brearly had brought horses to Madang and put them out to pasture, against a time when transportation up to Marienberg should come that way. They had more horses, I doubt not, than you could have found anywhere else throughout the whole of the Territory. For in New Guinea horses do not thrive; they get swamp cancers, and as they must live largely on grass, they become mal-nourished and useless. In the islands oxen and huge vicious water-buffalo are the beasts of burden, when kanakas cannot fit the bill.

So Jim and Brearly had been cooling their heels on a plantation up the New Guinea coast, alternately loafing about, fishing for what scarce *bêche-de-mer* inhabited the sea-floor thereabouts, gathering trocus and green-snail (mother-of-pearl), and making occasional schooner trips to Madang to pick up news of interest to them. There had been rumors

that Burns-Philp was going to bring a large schooner up from Fiji to send out among the northern atolls of the Territory among the badly charted waters where no island steamer ventured, but they had been rumors merely, and rumors are poor things to bite on in the Territory. But now news came that the *Nuloa* was true. I promised myself that, somehow, I would have a passage on the *Nuloa* when she left Madang.

Meanwhile, Jim and I had hit up a pleasant friendship. Besides liking him, I had a great respect for him as a fearless pioneer, as most people in the Mandated Territory have.

Come four of an afternoon, we would start off for a jungle-trail ride, I on the D. O.'s broad-backed lazy steed, he on a pony he was specially fond of. Beautiful and unforgettable rides, as the palm shadows grew long, out through the great government plantation with the kunai grass up to our stirrups, and leaving this behind, along the ruins of roads that had once been the pride of the German colonists, but which were now reverting to jungle.

One day, a mile out of Madang, we came upon the charred ruins of a great plantation house, an ill-fated ghostly place, superbly set to overlook a chasm-like valley that rose steeply to the dense foot-hills of the Finisterres. The ruins must once have been an impressive dwelling, for there still remained a series of broad concrete steps ornamented with two stone lions. Here, too, bougainvillea ran riot; hibiscus, poinciana, and frangipani had spread everywhere. We coaxed our horses through the wilderness of flowers to the brink of the steep incline, and looked silently for a few minutes into the inscrutable mountains, where lies the feathered and flowering beauty that belongs to New Guinea alone, in whose

veins lie probable treasures of gems and ore, whose mists veil people the world has left untouched.

Then wheeling, pleased because we liked very much each other's society, we pursued our ride. There are such delightful things to encounter along the trails out there—a drift of passionate sweetness from hidden bush or tree, a sudden turning of the trail that takes you out of the sun into the dankly cool shadow of a verdant jungle pass, and one time the red flash of a paradise bird.

There is an abandoned goblin forest of rubber plantation where fantastic, twisted limbs send down roots to the ground, a fearful place to be lost in at night. Through this we occasionally rode to a place where a lone Chinese trader had carved himself a clearing out of the jungle, and lived by bartering valueless bright trinkets, colored dyes, and tobacco for sun-dried copra, ivory nuts, and, as Jim said, sometimes nuggets of gold.

Jim was on good terms with the fat Celestial. At his iron-roofed shack we would usually pause long enough for his native house-boy, whose wool was plumed with paradise feathers, to shinny up a cocoanut palm and bring for each of us a young nut, a koolau. Twisting a strong vine around his feet, the savage would propel himself to the head of the palm, sixty feet above us, and drop the two great yellow koolaus; then, like a monkey he would descend and with one clean gash of his long knife clean the outer shell away from the hole that our lips might touch only the cool, soft fiber of the inner shell. The chill, sweet water inside was passing good for a thirsty traveler. If I wished, he would cleave the koolau in two and deftly make me a spoon from a segment of shell so that I could eat of the flesh. And then we would turn back.

Jim was an odd man and likable. He was Australian born; he was thirty-four, and in those years he had packed a lifetime of experience and adventures. He had been to a university; he had been a jackaroo, soldier, gold miner, horse-breaker, explorer, recruiter; at one time in his career he had even been a dancing teacher. And kind! He was one of the kindest men in the world. He had a way with horses that was magic. Most of the horses that he had at Madang were unbroken, and two of them nobody except Jim—not even Brearly—could approach. He never lost his coolness or gentleness with them. I have watched him approach a horse, halter in hand, while the animal stood, head up, nerves quivering, suspicious, and yet reassured by something in the calm voice speaking to him. Yes, Jim was a wizard with the horses.

Only once did I see a paradise bird in New Guinea. As I have said, it was on one of these rides into the foot-hills with Jim. It was a vivid, glorious flash of scarlet, with trailing tail-feathers. It darted across our vision and was gone. The birds of paradise flourish on the mainland of New Guinea, but their home is among the hills well inland from the coast.

Others around Madang had been more fortunate in seeing the birds than I. Beyond the clearing, in the quiet of the foot-hills, occasionally one comes upon the more common variety—the sunset paradise—with plumage of beautiful orange and brown coloring or cardinal red. The rarer varieties are up in the mountains; most inaccessible of all is the blue paradise. I have heard gold miners tell of the wonderful blue paradise in the gold country around Salamaua. I saw a blue paradise pelt in the museum at Rabaul. I marvelled that such a thing of beauty could be. Its back was of the richness and texture of black velvet, of a fur thickness rather



than feather, and the shoulder ruffs were edged with royal blue. Some of the tail plumes were four feet long, and were electric blue. It was a lovely, royal, pathetic thing, that pelt.

Although the paradise bird is on the increase in New Guinea, it is especially forbidden to traffic in them in the British-controlled area. Of course there are paradise bootleggers; it is as easy to procure the more ordinary variety of plumes, even in Rabaul, as it is to get Scotch in Brooklyn. The fine is heavy, however, and may be accompanied by imprisonment. Nevertheless, there is considerable smuggling of pelts over the Dutch border, where paradise plumes are still a prime export.

I had been educated in the belief that gathering paradise plumes was a most inhuman pursuit. I had a notion that the birds were firmly held while the plumage was plucked from their quivering flesh, and then were thrown back into their nests to die—mother birds, young birds, and all. If what I gathered in New Guinea is true (information, I mean, not feathers) this was sensational prohibition propaganda. The gathering of paradise plumes can hardly endanger the existence of the species, because it is only the male bird whose feathers are valuable, and he must be about seven years old before his plumage has reached the zenith of its beauty; in the meantime he has reproduced his kind from five to six times. Nor are the feathers plucked from the tortured body; the bird is killed by a very small bullet, so as not to damage the pelt, and the skin is taken intact.

Australia is adamant about the owning and wearing of paradise feathers. Any one who has these plumes must be able to prove that they were in his possession before the prohibition law went into effect.

Sydney harbor must be a graveyard of paradise feathers,

cast overboard by smuggling persons who lost their courage at the last moment. Paradise feathers are the chief problem of Sydney customs officers. There are current in Rabaul many amusing stories about the traffic. The wife of a D. O. going down on furlough lost her nerve after the boat had docked at Sydney, and shoved the plumes out of the port, where they dropped at the very feet of a customs officer.

The chief collector of customs at Rabaul had a hard one to live down. By great strategy and diligence he had intercepted a cleverly disguised shipment of paradise plumes as they were about to be sneaked out of the capital. He had theoretically confiscated them by locking them up in the strong room of the customs office. Not long after, much to his chagrin, he discovered that the strong room had been broken into, and the plumes removed so cleverly that no trace whatever of the culprits was left. The C. C. of C. swore some not very pretty Orstrylian swears, and every one in Rabaul enjoyed the little game of hide-and-seek tremendously, for sins are lightly forgiven in Rabaul, save by those they adversely affect.

A week went by with no trace of the purloined paradise feathers. Then one morning there was a shout in the customs office, for a "clark" had come upon a coat of the chief collector's hanging in an obscure corner, from the lining of which protruded the endmost tail-feather of a forbidden bird. Other clerks crowded close to investigate; in each pocket was stuffed a plume, while two others smuggled within the lining. The Purloiner of Plumes was figuratively thumbing his nose at the chief collector and providing Rabaul with a good laugh for a long time to come. The rest of the plumes never were reclaimed.

But the smuggling of plumes by Jane Dale amused me

most. If it hadn't been for her Aunt Henrietta she would never have got the feathers off the ship. And one of them was a blue paradise. Jane herself didn't have much imagination, but paradise plumes will develop cupidity in the most honest souls. Anyhow, Jane was going down south on furlough, and she succumbed to the desire to smuggle her sunset, scarlet, and precious blue feathers into Sydney. When the time approached for disembarking and running the gauntlet of customs, she began to weaken. But Jane was favorite niece to an elderly great-aunt who had come down to the quay to greet her. Aunt Henrietta was a grande dame of the Victorian school, who rode behind horses instead of risking her entertaining life in a motor car, and who clung to the tradition of voluminous and lengthy skirts even in the post-war era. Jane described Aunt Henrietta as being an imposing individual and somewhat of an old martinet with a way with her.

Anyway, Aunt Henrietta came aboard to greet her niece who had married and gone to live in outlandish places. After embracing her, Jane showed her a parcel that she didn't know what to do with. She couldn't even think of a safe way to dispose of it. Aunt Henrietta, looking at it thoughtfully for a moment, said briskly: "Nonsense, child, there's nothing to worry about. Just give them to me." They were in the privacy of Jane's cabin at the time. Without batting an eye, Aunt Henrietta lifted up her skirt and somewhere in the folds of a heavy silk petticoat she firmly concealed three contraband paradise pelts. Majestically the old lady swept ashore into the midst of the enemy. Woe to the custom's officer who started hunting paradise plumes among Aunt Henrietta's petticoats. She's dead now, God rest her soul! I hope she hasn't had to pay for the deception.

Egrets are also common in New Guinea, and equally forbidden; also osprey and goura. The goura situation is trying, for the bird itself is common and very good eating. It may be killed for food, but there may be no trafficking in the beautiful crest feathers, nor may they be taken out of the Territory.

In Rabaul, my number one boy appeared one day with a priceless cluster of white osprey in his wool. I could have purchased it for a few sticks of tobacco. But the knowledge of the mental anguish in store for me with it in my possession, and its very probable discovery if I attempted to get it through the customs at any time, made me pause. I passed up the bargain. I wonder if I could have got away with it.

It seems strange that there are so few animals in New Guinea. Knowing little about it, I had expected to find wild life akin to Africa's. And certainly monkeys.

There are no monkeys of any description. Nor are there any indigenous large animals. There are wallaby rats, like tiny kangaroos; little round-eyed kapul, or possums, which the natives skin and eat; great pukhpukhs (alligators); strange red-and-white marsupial possums; small flying possums, or squirrels, wingless but with a web of fur from forepaw to hind legs, which climb *up* and fly *down*; and the great predatory flying fox, which the natives call black-bokis. This is an enormous bat, sometimes with a wing-spread of four to five feet; everywhere at night you can hear the flapping of their wings. They will cling to ripe papaws, on which they chiefly live. And there are also dread vampire bats.

Poisonous insects and spiders are everywhere. Lizards decorate ceiling and wall, and frequently drop, a clammy horror, when least expected. Scorpions are a danger, and are agonizing in attack. Cockroaches, large and small, are the bane of

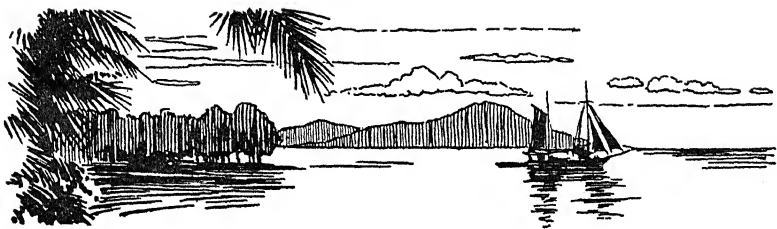
civilized existence, for they eat clothes, particularly silk, with unseemly relish. I had thought at first that I couldn't stand the roaches; but constant and close companionship with them deadened, if it didn't kill, my fear of them.

There are a few poisonous snakes in New Guinea, particularly on the mainland, but no one ever seems to regard them as a menace. There are also pythons, twenty or more feet long.

The sea is more deadly than the land. There are sharks, great sea-pike with double rows of teeth that can snap off a leg or arm, devil fish, and clams that sometimes weigh a ton. The natives seem to have no fear in the water; I have seen them swimming unconcernedly with an ominous fin circling horribly close; and the kanakas merely made much hilarious noise and splashing, and came to no harm.

But while there are no large and fierce animals out there, there is the little, striped insect of evil—the anopheles mosquito, carrier of malaria. It can, and does, spread misery.





XVI

THE SKIPPER RELENTS

JIM was excited about the coming of the *Nuloa*. For many weeks he had been biding his time, waiting for some way to transport his horses and supplies up to Marienberg. He was tired of the enforced idleness; he wanted to get back into the hinterland; he loved the jungle, loved the battle against swift-running rivers and primordial bush, loved the ever-present sense of danger. He expected great things of this trip into the hinterland; he and Brearly were to recruit natives as carriers for the gold fields. At Edie Creek and the Bulolo Valley they were paying twenty pounds a head for strong boys. They were paying that high price because native carriers were almost impossible to get up there, what with the wretched miasmatic climate, fear of the hostile neighboring tribes that resented invasion, and the hardships connected with toiling, shoulder-laden, up to the gold country.

I was excited, too, about the expected schooner. I had confided to Jim my consuming ambition to enter the Sepik River. He agreed that it would be a great adventure for me, though he allowed he doubted if I could ship on the *Nuloa* for the voyage she was supposed to be undertaking. But he promised to do what he could to help me.

I wanted to go with the *Nuloa* more than I've ever wanted to do anything. I had lived for months on the islands; I

knew what they offered of happiness and desolation; now I wanted something else. I wanted to wander lazily and aimlessly for weeks through the Pacific, touching upon sun-splashed atolls, harboring at night in still lagoons, lying under a million bright stars. Who hasn't achingly wanted, at some time in his life, to idle aboard a schooner through tropic seas? Jim didn't seem to be as impressed with my idyl as I was. He said briefly: "A schooner's a hell of a life." And later he warned: "The monsoons will be blowing soon, that's no time to be at sea." The threat of a monsoon aroused my enthusiasm. I didn't know about monsoons then.

One morning we heard the kanaka shout of "Sail-o!" Through the islands the *Nuloa* sailed slowly, beautifully.

She was a big schooner, as South Pacific schooners go, 190 tons; and she had the lovely lines of a yacht. Coming from Suva, she was a stranger in these waters. While she was feeling her way among the myriad islands of the harbor, the population of Madang clustered at the bridge in curiosity and welcome; also with the urge toward cold beer in its soul, for there would be ice aboard. On the unsheltered upper deck I saw a short, squarely built man in khaki shorts and with a wide-brimmed Panama on his head busily shouting orders. When the ship came close I recognized, to my surprise and relief, that he was no other than Captain Alys, formerly skipper of one of the little trading steamers out of Rabaul.

Late that afternoon Captain Alys stopped by Meg's bungalow for tea. He was in a genial mood, just mellow. He told us that Burns-Philp had brought the *Nuloa* up from Fiji, where she had been making inter-island voyages for eighteen years, and that he was now to take her out on an experimental cruise up the New Guinea coast, through the Admiraltys, and out among the northern islands of the archipelago as far as

the Anchorites, just under the equator. The purpose of the cruise was to gather copra at the outlying island plantations, drop petrol, oil, lumber, foodstuffs, and other cargo at obscure plantations, and find out in general what the chances were for establishing a regular trade route for the *Nuloa* out among these badly charted, rarely visited waters. What copra was grown and dried on these plantations, far off the track of the regular island steamer, was taken at fitful intervals by small privately owned schooners to the nearest port of call—"concentrating stations" they call them—to be transported to Rabaul by steamer.

The *Nuloa's* cruise was undetermined as to length and destination; her skipper was simply out to discover what he could about the vaguely charted waters and northern atolls of the archipelago. He had cargoes, however, for two plantations along the New Guinea coast and for the mission station at Marienberg, up the Sepik River.

I said to him: "Captain Alys, take me as a passenger. You just don't know how good I'll be."

Having poured himself another beer, he said: "It's no good having a woman aboard a schooner on a trip like this. Women are in the way. They always make trouble." When Captain Alys had something to drink he was down on women.

I said: "I won't make any trouble. I'll be as quiet as a mouse if you'll let me go along. I've come all the way to New Guinea for a schooner trip like this."

Jim put in: "She won't give you any trouble, Alys. Take her along." Captain Alys was fond of Jim.

Captain Alys said: "Do you realize what you're getting into? I don't know where I'm going, or how long we'll be gone. We may be gone several weeks or we may be gone for

months. If you get tired of it, there's nothing you can do about it—and we don't want any complaining or whining!" The short, round skipper emphasized this fiercely, sitting forward suddenly in his chair, and flourishing his glass of beer at me. He was getting heated, what with the beer and the thought of a complaining female aboard his schooner.

I said, also with some heat: "But I *won't* whine, or get tired of it. I *know* what I want to do!"

When he had gone, Jim reassured me: "Don't worry. He'll take you."

The next day Captain Alys said: "Do you still want to go with us?" I replied: "You bet!" And he said: "We'll be sailing day after to-morrow at six A. M." I replied: "Aye, aye, Sir."

I went to the B. P. store to make arrangements. Ordinary travel by schooner is a pound a day; that is the universal rate among the islands. It is also the rate for island steamer travel. But under the circumstances, since no one could know how long we should be gone, they charged me twelve shilling a day—about \$3.00. I didn't care what it cost, so long as my letter of credit held out; for so far, thanks to my job in Rabaul, and the hospitality of the out-stations where they would never let me pay my way, my letter of credit was intact.

"Ho! Ho!" thought I, "here is an adventure!" The accomplishment of what I most wanted to do! We were heading for a mysterious river and reef-fanged, little-known seas. The *Nuloa*, of course, carried no wireless. If disaster overtook us there would be little chance of rescue, for only rarely did small schooners frequent the waters of the northern atolls, and more rarely still in the monsoon season. Our food would be such tinned goods as the schooner carried, relieved

by what we ourselves could procure from sea or island. Our water supply would be dependent on rain, caught in galvanized tanks. Furthermore, the northwest monsoon would shortly be upon us, for it was October. Maskee! It sounded wonderful!

In my mind's vivid picture I had neglected to include cockroaches that overran the schooner, and millions of copra bugs, and dangling white worms that eventually grew up to be copra bugs. If I had, I might not have gone. I airily dismissed ghosts of black-water fever and malaria that stalk one constantly in New Guinea. I even hoped for a monsoon.



XVII

UNCHARTED SEAS

THE *Nuloa* didn't sail at sunrise, although I was ready for her. Jim and Brearly were ready for her, too. We met as the great sun slipped its moorings. I had my arms full of things that somehow I hadn't found place to pack, and two sleepy savages bore the rest of my belongings on their shoulders.

There were two other passengers waiting at the bridge. One was a big, good-looking Australian named West; the other was a little, seedy, middle-aged man with very round and faded eyes. We were to drop them at their respective plantations along the New Guinea coast. Kanakas were busily loading cargo; Brearly was checking off various items of the four tons of equipment and supplies.

Obviously the *Nuloa* wouldn't depart for several hours, but we didn't want to leave the scene of action unless the skipper agreed that we might. So while Jim leaned like a straw man against a battered copra shed I sat down on a five-

gallon case of petrol and extracted a cigarette from my tin. Idle kanakas, flamboyant with red hibiscus, hung around in the background to enjoy the excitement. A native police-boy, his white pancake hat set jauntily atop his mop of wool, swaggered importantly on patrol, holding his gun stiffly against his shoulder. West, the big Australian, wandered up to me and offered a banana, which I ate gratefully.

We sailed at noon.

The *Nuloa* was a bonza craft, by comparison with the tiny schooners of my acquaintance around Samarai and Rabaul. Three steps led down from the poopdeck to the cabin—the saloon was just big enough for a table surrounded by eight revolving chairs and a built-in sideboard; a skylight gave light by day, a swinging hurricane lamp by night. There were six tiny cabins.

My own cabin was just big enough to turn around in. It was a nice little cabin, with only one bunk in it. Sometimes between our ports of call five had to bunk in each of the two large cabins, but even when we carried a planter's wife with us for a few nights my own privacy was never disturbed. That was because—ahem!—I was the star passenger. That is what I told myself at the moment.

The chief drawback to my cabin was cockroaches. They ranged in size from little chaps the size of water-bugs to roaches as big as mice. I shouldn't have been so annoyed if I had been sure that they would stay out of my bunk at night. If Elisa, the Fijian steward, forgot to light my hurricane lamp after dark, and I had to enter the cabin with my flashlight, I would surprise them. At night I could hear them playing around among my books and supplies. Sometimes in the morning I would see a little one on the wall beside my bunk, but I don't think a really sizable one ever kept me

company. I learned never to grab anything up hurriedly, but to tap it or shake it out first, thus giving the roaches time to take to cover. God, how I hated them!

My cabin was next to the pantry, which doubtless accounted for the luxuriance of these playmates. In fact, after we had been out for a couple of weeks, Jake, the engineer, inquired genially: "How are the cockroaches in your cabin?"

"It's alive with them," I answered, thinking he was about to suggest an exterminator. He chuckled: "I've been waiting for you to say something about 'em. They gave *me* that cabin at first, and I couldn't stomach the cockroaches, so I moved me over here." His cabin was on the opposite side of the saloon. So that was it—the Jonah cabin had been wished on me. After that wild horses couldn't have pulled a complaint out of me about cockroaches. A few mornings later I had a sweet revenge. The engineer emerged from his cabin for breakfast, looking dour and rubbing his back. He announced that he had lain so hard on a bloody cockroach that part of its shell had stuck into his back. I grinned cheerfully.

We had what might be called a miscellaneous cargo: timber to be dropped at Dylup Plantation to build new copra sheds; lots of tinned food to be left at various plantations; cases of beer; several hundred cases of petrol to be concentrated at Marienberg for possible use by a transpacific airplane. The foredeck carried Jim and Brearly's eight horses, flocks of ducks and chickens, a sow and a hog, and some goats; also about fifty kanakas belonging to the recruiters and the two plantation men. The saloon opened on the foredeck, and between horses, kanakas, and barnyard fowl and beasts, it didn't smell too good when we had a head wind.

So, on that lovely morning, I headed away, in the company of seven white men and sixty-odd Melanesian savages,

for parts unknown. As there seemed to be no place to put one's self, with the decks all piled with cargo, we waved good-by to Madang from the vantage point of petrol cases. We didn't rate carnival streamers in departing, being only a schooner, but Jim cranked his gramophone and we set out to the tune of the "Froth Blower's Anthem":

The more we are together,
Together, together,
O-O-O! the more we are together,
The hap-pie-er we'll be!

We all met at lunch, or rather at noon-time dinner. The minute I saw Charley the mate my heart warmed to him. He it was, I later found, that had been bitterly opposed to carrying a woman aboard the *Nuloa* for a protracted voyage; for Captain Alys had gone into a huddle with his two officers about taking me with them. I don't know why Charley's veto didn't win out. Albeit, upon meeting me, he showed no antagonism, whatever his innermost convictions may have been. He was a big man, and once had been splendidly handsome, but twenty-five years of knocking about the tropics had put their seal upon him. He wore khaki trousers and a knit undershirt, its long sleeves rolled up to his elbows. His hair was straightly parted in the center and slicked down. His mouth was firmly set, so firmly that it seemed to draw lines from his nostrils to the corners of his mouth; his eyes were handsome, but, like his mouth, there was something tragic about them. I didn't know until later that Charley had been down to the dregs of life, through drink, and had come back again. Only once, in all the time I knew him, did he ever take a drink. That was when the cocky died.

Captain Alys, I have said, was a little man, inclined to

rotundity. He had a way of always looking neat. He had had a cataract removed from one eye, and another was just beginning to grow on the other one. When he was sober Captain Alys was soft-voiced, courteous, and pleasant; he rarely drank aboard the schooner. One of the strangest stories in the South Seas, that of Captain Alys. When I sailed with him I already knew some of it, and could understand much in him because thereof. During the following weeks he and I kept many a watch together, and he pieced out the rest of it for me—about the girl he had married, and lost, and found again under the most extraordinary circumstances.

Jake the engineer was scrubbed and hair-slicked to within an inch of his life for the first meal with the lady. Jake was tall, but I don't believe he was two inches thick through.

So here we were—not a coat or a collar among the crowd—though Jim was still deferentially in white ducks.

There was the little man with faded, ingenuous eyes, named Elking, who was an overseer and bound for Borum Plantation. He looked like the pathetic little henpecked husband of the comic strips, but Jim told me he was nothing short of a genius in handling natives.

West, the big Australian, was something different. He didn't talk much, but I have an idea that on his own territory he possessed a lusty good humor. When I found his handsome eyes on me, which was frequently, I had the feeling that whatever virtues he ascribed to me, Virtue didn't head them. It didn't embarrass me; I simply didn't want him to try out his theory. He didn't.

§

The ice was gone—finish by the time we left Madang. I was

curious to know what sort of *kaikai* (food) was to be offered aboard this tramp schooner whereon I had cast my lot for an indefinite period. Not that it mattered much, for I had lived on tinned stuffs for so long that I had lost my sense of taste. The first meal wasn't disheartening. There was tinned soup, rice, tinned cod's roe, tinned string-beans, and cocoanut-leavened bread, huge pilot biscuit, tea, and tinned apricots for a sweet. While I was deep in conversation with the mate, Jim called my attention to a small cockroach ambling along the table-cloth and headed in my direction. A flip of my fingernail put a stop to his peregrinations.

Our steward-cabin-boy was a Solomon Islander, black as ebony; he was supervised by the Fijian chief steward, Elisa. Elisa was a most intelligent savage. His countenance and his disposition were pleasant. He was educated, too, and could read, and write a beautiful hand. Elisa's father had been majordomo and right-hand man to the last hereditary ruler of Fiji; if he had chosen he could have been educated at Oxford with his brother, who is now a prominent lawyer in Suva. But Elisa was indolent and loved the sea, so he had let his opportunities go by. He had no ambition whatever. I'm glad he didn't, for weeks later, when for days the wind and rain tore in fury up and down the Pacific, and we wallowed alone and helpless in the trough of battling waves, and no one had time to remember me languishing with fever and a terrible seasickness, it was Elisa who looked in on me with a tumbler of ginger-beer now and then, and saved me from going daft with thirst and the strange bands of pain around my head. His heathen, kindly face appeared angelic to me then.

Seventeen savages, from all over the South Pacific, com-

posed the *Nuloa's* crew. They were a fierce-looking lot, and not much to be relied upon when it came to standing watch. But they were willing sailors.

Two long stems of bananas hung from an awning beam at the stern of the schooner. Three or four papaws lay on some petrol tins in the sun to ripen. For a few days there were great green-skinned oranges—coarse-fleshed and refreshingly bitter—and we had a large basket of limes with which to freshen up the drinking water. There were a few eggs, too; when these gave out we should revert to the powdered variety. On the whole, with the decks cleared of cargo, things would be quite snug and comfortable.

The previous skipper of the *Nuloa* had been a Scot; perhaps his economy accounted for the rottenness of the lines and canvas on the schooner. It was years since these had been renewed. Now the rotten rope began to give out; the skipper and mate swore prolifically, and with an eye to approaching monsoons the mate set about supervising the repairs. But there was little spare canvas aboard. The mate once said, "It's a crime to send a ship to sea in this condition."

We set out up the New Guinea coast. For two hours we went serenely along under engine power. Then without warning the vibration ceased, and we lay quite still seven miles out from shore. Nobody but the engineer and skipper minded; time meant nothing in any of our lives, in the blessed way of the equator zone. There was a tiny breeze; up went the sails, hardly bellying in the playing trades, and we drifted gently on until once more the engine throbbed.

We had a mascot on board—the engineer's pet, a grimy white cockatoo with a beautiful yellow crest. Funny how sailors lavish affection on a mascot. The engineer seemed really to love this bird. And how the cocky loved to be

petted; it was entirely promiscuous in bestowing kisses directly on the mouth of any one who happened to be fondling it. The engineer spent much of his spare time with the cocky on his shoulder, or on his crooked arm, scratching the bird's crest in return for affectionate pecks on the lips. It struck me that the engineer imagined he had a pretty and accommodating barmaid in the cocky's stead, but I may do him an injustice. The mate, however, heartily disliked "that bloody bird."

I slept the sleep of the very good that night. Jim and Brearly and I had carried the little square gramophone up on the topdeck, and there we let it serenade a million constellations, while we stretched out on the skylights and helped the mate keep watch. It was late when we turned in. Even the kanakas on the foredeck had broken up their squatting circles and ceased crooning their singsings of the sea and big-fella-s'ips. They lay on the hard deck, utterly relaxed and dead asleep. Of them all only two were awake—the Buka quartermaster, with a great red patch about one eye, steering the course set for him, and the lookout silhouetted against the sky. The quartermaster crooned to himself beneath the fitful flicker of the hurricane lamp.

We were preparing to anchor off the New Guinea coast when I awoke in the very early morning. We had tacked around for several hours awaiting the dawn. I had awakened with that feeling of anticipation which grown-ups so rarely recapture. I looked out of the tiny port just above my bunk at a delightful picture. A volcano rose sheer out of rosy water, fantastically lovely with drifting clouds across its face obscuring a large part of the huge cone, but leaving its peak dark and clear against the early sky. It was Karkar, inactive but giving out sulphur fumes from a crater three miles wide.

Serene, trusting, and improvident, a mission plantation lay at its feet, and three fertile plantations.

Ten minutes later, on deck, I caught the concentrated beauty of the South Pacific, in one glance. We lay a quarter-mile out from shore. On the mainland, off our port bow, was Dylup Plantation under the trades-fretted cocoanut fronds; it was shady, green, and cool in the early morning, and grass-roofed huts clustered along the shore. To starboard, blue water broke white on a coral reef, and far off on the horizon lay banks of white clouds, like a fleet of icebergs.

We were to spend the day at Dylup. The plantation manager came out in a dory to greet us, and for breakfast. There were tinned sausages, and he ate as if he had hollow legs. We had brought him some long-awaited timber. He



invited over to luncheon all who cared to accept. We were to drop West here. Down the rope-ladder into the dory we climbed—except the mate (who never left the schooner) and the skipper.

Gaining dry land wasn't easy. Between us and it great rollers broke on the reef, playing in foamy swirls over coral shallows. Under lubberly guidance, we might well be upset and scratched raw on the coral. Maskee! It's all in the day's work. A bo's'n squatted in the bow directing the four oarsmen, all watching narrowly for the breaking combers, and to take advantage thereof to send us riding upon the reef. Landing in a dory on a reef is wet business under the best conditions, and a strand of coral prevented us from making the beach. It was then that West swung my substantial self upon his shoulder and bore me safely to shore, with flattering ease.

Like a shell from which its occupant had long since departed, the great plantation house at Dylup stood on a hill overlooking palm tops to the sea. It must have been comfortable once; it certainly could have been, with its great veranda and wide doorways. But here, as in so many of the New Guinea out-stations, was the sense of decay. Once the slope leading up to the bungalow had been a garden; now it was a tangle of weeds and choking undergrowth. The house had once been painted, but many monsoons had whipped it bare, and the wood was of a forlorn, disheartening gray. But hospitality and genuine welcome seemed to lend the dwelling a wry and careworn smile. On the veranda waited the inevitable tumblers plus whiskey and soda and beer. An iron bedstead with an uncovered tick mattress, a canvas porch-swing, three or four ancient chaises longues, a couple of tables, and a gramophone, completed the furnishings of the

dwelling, save for a few spare army cots and nondescript dining-room furniture.

While we lounged around sipping at tall glasses, I tried to visualize what one could do with a few bolts of chintz and some gay paint toward changing this stark house into a cheerful place. And I fell upon the ancient truth that men, despite their many virtues, are a helpless lot with blunted sensibilities. Most women would have done something with the place to make it livable.

But the plantation showed none of the neglect of the house. Later we wandered through straight avenues of palms, between which the grass was cut neatly and throughout which cocoanuts were heaped in orderly piles. Great pods hung from cocoa trees. Copra was drying in the sun on long racks. After peeking into smoke-driers the delicious sweet and smoky odor of copra clung to my nostrils for a long time. Among these sheds stood great piles of cocoanut shell, to be used for fuel; every part of the cocoanut is utilized. (Copra shell is the fuel of the islands, for coal, when procurable, is \$50 a ton.) At the sight of the great rarity there, a herd of cows, my stomach revolted; they were almost without exception covered with great, red, running ulcers—swamp cancers. The cattle were for breeding purposes, only incidentally for fresh milk. I understood why one does not drink milk in the tropics even when it is to be had.

The advent of a woman completely upset the *savoir-faire* of the cook-boy, and luncheon was long in coming. Not enough crockery—maskee! The host ate soup out of a gravy boat. But plenty of everything else. It would probably be a long time before such a large crowd of white men gathered again at this far place.

At sunset we had a farewell "spot" to everybody's health, and wandered cheerily down to the beach. We were carried out to the dory by kanakas. We nerved ourselves for the truly dangerous negotiation of the incoming breakers, back to the *Nuloa*. Four strong kanakas at the oars and a "boss boy" at the bow. There was a pause for an oncoming comber that starts far out, a chorus of "Hus-sahs!" from the bo's'n and crew, then a superhuman heave at four oars; we stood for a brief second on the rudder, we dropped, drenched, on the other side of the wave. All right, here came another. "Hus-sah!" We clung for dear life, riding the breakers. We gained the safety of deep water!

The skipper and the mate were waiting for us at the top of the rope-ladder, impatient to be away in daylight. Four strong hands helped me up to the deck, and I felt suddenly a strong affection for this ship—a "home" feeling. Let us be gone for many weeks, let us be gone forever—I didn't care.

So we started out again, minus one of our passengers, and minus, happily, the timber that cluttered the upperdeck. That night Jim ate his canned peas with his knife, watching me out of the corner of his eye. And the mate seemed to be feeling that a woman wasn't going to make life aboard the schooner unbearable after all; perhaps because I had come in happy and drenched from crossing the reef, and hadn't minded it. There grew to be a very sincere friendship between the mate and me. I have liked few people as well.

A parting gift from Dylup was a rope of delicious little finger-bananas, a palm-woven basket of limes, and another of tart, juicy five-corners. There is always a parting gift in New Guinea.

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Then we had a casualty. The engineer's cockatoo had a habit of balancing precariously on the sternmost rail of the deck, from which vantage point he would flap his wings with a squawk and indulge in a death-defying, pigeon-toed promenade around to the water-tank and back. We were well away from Dylup when the engine broke down; but it didn't last long, and even the engineer wasn't disgruntled. Once more we were throbbing rhythmically on our way. Quite suddenly there was bedlam among the boys. "Cockeroo! 'im 'e go pinish! Cockeroo! 'im 'e si-top along soda-water!"

Horried, we gazed toward our wake, where in the increasing distance floundered the cocky, helpless, hopeless, beyond salvation. The engineer dashed down the ladder from topdeck, shouting to the boys to lower the pinnacle. The mate, though he was usually kind enough, railed at the idea of further delay, and called down to know what was the idea. But despite him and his command of English and profusions of "bloodys," the engine ceased with a cough, the pinnacle lowered, and the cocky's master set out to rescue him. Alas, the pinnacle returned with the news that the cockatoo had gone west. The engineer climbed aboard gloomily. At sight of his real concern, the mate relented and together they disappeared below deck, later emerging much more cheerful, each with a black Boston garter around his left arm. I suspect that the mate, upon that one occasion, fell for "a little swift one."

§

Jim's way with horses was marvelous. In their cramped space and with no exercise, they grew restive. A stampede of

eight horses would have raised havoc with the schooner; but frequently he went back to pet each one and speak a cheerful word that acted like magic on the nervous animals.

After two days at sea Jim ceased sporting white duck trousers, doubtless because the lady didn't register sufficient appreciation of the gesture; he reverted comfortably to khaki shorts. In a land of grotesque outfits, his was supreme. Behold him with a vast expanse of hairy awkward leg between shorts and heavy wool socks; great hobnail boots; a worn khaki shirt, frayed where the sleeves had been sawed off above the elbow, and with a freckled sunburned throat and chest peeking from his open shirt; two sombreros, one fitted within the other, as is the custom with men in the bush, from under which the ginger hair straggled over a humorous eye. Add a cartridge belt carrying a Colt 38. There you have Jim, trail blazer of the hinterlands.

I think he would have liked to be a handsome man, particularly in the eyes of women. Once I said to him, "You look like Abe Lincoln." Making a wry little face, he said, "He was a very ugly man, wasn't he?"

Jim was a queer person. I imagine he had always been getting in the way of himself, always regretfully but surely putting the worst foot forward, especially with women. But he had a wide knowledge that came from no superficial learning or observation, and his keen insight into situations and people belonged to an uncommonly well-ordered brain.

One night he was talking about his life in New Guinea, especially about his coming recruiting expedition, what he hoped to gain financially from it, and of the known obstacles facing him and Brearly. I had my own mental reservations about recruiting as a profession. Finally Jim said: "That's a

rotten way for a man to earn his living, isn't it? Buying and selling other human beings? Sometimes I despise myself for it." There was no satisfactory answer handy for me, to Jim, so I made none. And the next minute I welcomed Brearly's approach.

One morning another volcano, Manum, rose to starboard; we passed so closely that I could see the lava-gutted sides. Manum has been good for five years, but by day she wears a wreath of smoke and by night the sky glows from her breath. On our port side stretched the dark jungle of New Guinea mainland, its dense shore-line broken occasionally by a tiny native "soda-water" (salt-water) village. Hardly out of the shadow of the volcano, we dropped anchor half a mile off shore. We were at the plantation of Awar.

It seemed that we had the lanes of the Pacific to ourselves; not since we left Madang days before had we set eyes on a sail. Life had gone on aboard the schooner with amazing smoothness and good-humored harmony. Apparently carrying a woman aboard wasn't spelling disaster. By unspoken common consent all the men had accepted me as part of the normal state of affairs. That was wise of them because I was irremovably there, and the schooner hadn't enough spare room for strained relations.

Under ordinary circumstances the mate's language was that of a gentleman, but the angels must have clapped their hands to their ears when he began ordering about lazing kanakas. I have stood by listening without flinching to his unrestricted flow of language, after which he would pass me by, often bent on further and more tangible chastisement, with no thought of apology for the assault on my delicate feminine ears. I took this, from the mate, as a tribute, for,

bless him, he gave me credit for good sense and understanding of conditions, and for adapting myself to them without reservations. If his language offended me, I didn't have to stick around. We all knew that.





XVIII

LOTUS EATERS

AWAR lies stark alone, one of those gallant plantations holding its own against the primal forces of New Guinea. It faces an active volcano. The jungle crouches with hungry eyes at its back. Fifty miles further on the Sepik River empties its swift current into the ocean. Belligerent savage tribes inhabit the surrounding jungle, from which the white man and woman and child at Awar would have no refuge if these turned hostile, although an avenging Government would soon inflict harsh punishment for an outrage. The crazy little *Durour* and an occasional schooner out of Madang make theoretically periodic stops at the plantation, bringing supplies and lifting the copra. The D. O. stops there when he goes on patrol. Otherwise there are precious few white visitors.

Among our various supplies for the owner were several hundred cases of petrol, largely for the gasoline motor and the American motor lorry which this progressive plantation puts into use.

The skipper went with the first pinnacle of cargo, and returned with an invitation for all of us to go ashore. Kanakas were waiting at the reef to carry us to land. Even Jim, dan-

gling like a monkey on a stick, submitted to this undignified approach.

Here was no decadent, ill-managed plantation, taken over by some Sydney ex-shoe-clerk; it is a progressive organization, a little monarchy in the wilderness, revolving around three happy white people—a man and his wife and their little girl, whom her daddy calls his “ten boys.” Some people, a few people, are meant for life in the wilderness. This man and woman were. They had met in Egypt during the war—he a captain of the Anzacs, she an Australian nurse. Both were young and full of courage; some trick of fate threw them together. Then the end of the war . . . a wedding . . . and the search for a life that would not be too drab after the interlude of war. So here they were, contented exiles from the world, in the heart of New Guinea.

On the pleasant cool veranda I ate for the first time of sour-sop, a sort of small custard-apple with a center so soft and creamy that it must be eaten from the rind with a spoon; it has a delicate sweetish flavor somewhat like the ghost of a raspberry custard. Here, too, came wild kanakas from the hills, down to barter their copra, carved curios, spears, ivory nuts, anything barterable, for bright calico, salt, tobacco, or gay trinkets and colored powders, at the trade-store kept by the planter's wife.

They were a fantastic, savage-looking lot; the men with wide and painfully tight girdles about their waists, which gave an abnormally bulky appearance to their chests and shoulders; the hill women clad merely in bushy grass skirts, colored intricately with native pigments, their breasts a lace-work of tattooing. Knowing we were in notoriously bad country, I admit to certain misgivings about this group of twenty untamed savages who had descended upon us. But

there was no need for worry; not at the moment at any rate. The faces of the men were ugly, as I am sure only New Guinea faces can be ugly, with their tight, screwed-back coiffures and spike-toothed necklaces; but they were as peaceable as lambs. Sometimes when the little marys would begin chattering all together a broad-shouldered male would savagely turn with a "Pst!" which would silence them for a moment but discompose them not in the least. Like children, they were easily moved to laughter, and to fear. The gramophone never fails to excite fear in a kanaka. Some one put on a record, and as the voice came from the square oak "bokis" all chatter ceased. They were rooted to the spot, electrified

the plantation's stores would not be too great. Only the mate was missing at the festivities ashore. He had climbed a ladder up from hell, each rung a wrestle with the devil. Nobody, ever, urged the mate to backslide.

Not far from the plantation limits lies the native village of Awar, which except for occasional government patrols and the plantation owners themselves, has been untouched by white influence.

On a beautiful, lazy afternoon we set out to invade the bush village of Awar, the planter and his wife and myself. Old bullock-cart ruts made a fairly good road for the motor lorry to carry us to the outer rim of the plantation. We stopped here and there through the plantation at copra driers to investigate the day's progress.

We were headed for the bush village to buy saccas, which is the pith of the sago palm, to help feed the plantation labor. The plantation ended at a swift-flowing river tributary; our legs must carry us the rest of the way. A swaying bridge of saplings lashed with lawyer vines brought us to a cleared space surrounded by half a dozen large native houses built on six-foot piles. In the center, under a shelter, stood the inevitable garamut, a glorified tom-tom made from a great hollowed-out log. A few scantily clad heathens stood as silent as statues at our approach, watching us narrowly but with no antagonism. This village was but a suburb of the larger, finer one where dwelt the luluai (chief). A wide, palm-shaded path invited us deeper into the jungle; flowering plants and red-leaved bushes made the way sweet and beautiful. Six or seven naked pickaninnies followed us—sprung from the bush apparently, for we had not seen them in the village. They scattered like deer when we tried to make friends with them. Obviously the rising generation had

misgivings about these tall white beings. Then, with a sudden turning, we came upon a great clearing, around which twenty large stilt-houses of woven palm made a circular rim. These houses were different from any I was familiar with, though I knew that New Guinea villages are of varying kinds. Great peaked roofs extended far out beyond the walls, giving a dim cavernous effect to the openings.

A pageant of brown figures moved serenely back and forth, the men muscular and tightly girded with broad fiber belts from which extended a brief bark-cloth apron. Some of the male heads were dyed a violent red with betel dye; all wore their wool caught tightly back into a bushy psyche confined by a broad band. Hanging ear-lobe rims were plaited with shell money. Necks bristled with tooth necklaces. The girdles, so cruelly tight, had each been achieved upon reaching puberty, as is the custom; the lad, then but half-grown, had donned it proudly and had never taken it off, he had simply grown around it. It had a double advantage: it confined the stomach to a precious small appetite, thus saving work, and it made his chest and shoulders appear very large, so that he could swagger as a fine figure before the marys. That the monstrous girdle injuriously constricted his innards and guaranteed a shortened sojourn in this vale of tears seemed not to matter to the male census of Awar.

The women were singularly comely, as kanakas go. They moved with a supple animal grace that swayed their fine grass pulpuls gently. The heads of the younger ones were closely cropped, but some wore their grass in tight corkscrew curls dyed henna with clay.

It being well past midday, the women were busy; the bush kanaka eats twice a day, and this was meal-time. Our advent made little stir.

"Luluai, 'im 'e stop?" we inquired of a betel-chewing native who squatted cross-legged in the shade of a narrow veranda.

"'Im 'e stop," he answered without disturbing himself; and as he spoke the head man came forward, an old codger with rheumy eyes, wisps of feathers in his grass, and snags of betel-stained teeth. Grinning sociably, he held out a horny paw to the planter, whom he knew well. A great pile of pink saccas stood in a corner of the village, and the planter indicated that he would like to buy some of it. But the luluai would not sell, not for love or tobacco.

The sun beat mercilessly down upon us, though a trades-cooled night was certain. Remote kundus throbbed through the palpable humidity. A brilliant parrot overhead screamed raucously; the monotonous buzzing of jungle things contributed a drowsy obbligato to the afternoon; a hairy, squealing pig raced clumsily across the clearing, fleeing from an impish pickaninny. Nobody moved hurriedly, least of all ourselves. Except that the sun systematically transversed the skyway, time stood still in this place. We had found our way among honest-to-goodness Lotus Eaters.

I wanted to investigate the village. After shaking hands with the luluai we set out on a tour of exploration, followed by a crowd of kanakas, stung to active curiosity by our presence. Awar seemed to disprove the theory of race suicide in New Guinea, for here were many children; the monkeys (males of office-boy size) were naked, their heads shaven except for a strip reaching from forehead to nape of the neck; the little girls wore tiny grass pulpuls. Here all the women were bright-eyed and happy, and I envied them the ignorance that makes their lives so simple. What if most of them do die young, what if they don't know and don't hanker after

a horizon beyond their village? Maskee! Their eyes are glad, and they laugh so very easily.

Before a house-tambaran (ghost-house), which no woman is permitted to enter, I stood and blushed to the ears (after months in the islands I could still do it), while I studied the anatomically graphic drawings adorning its outer walls. The South Pacific native's life is built around sex; his interpretation of shame and modesty is not ours. He knows an Eden-like casualness concerning nakedness, the human body, and primal instincts. In native art, even in the most minute of figurines, such as adorn a kombung stick, sex is clearly indicated. Nor does this prove offensive sensuality; it is merely a statement of fact.

It appeared that the presence of a woman was taboo under a certain large grass-roofed shed, and for no apparent reason. But because we were white-fella-missus, the planter's wife and I were allowed to enter. It sheltered merely a long, empty table.

As usual the garamut had place of honor in the village. Awar's garamut was a magnificent work of art, elaborately carved in symbolic fish, animal, reptile, and floral figures. These garamuts—huge drums—are marvels of patient workmanship. Through an incision about two and a half inches wide and two feet long the entire inside pulp of the tree is worked out with the natives' bare hands. Then the interior is burned and smoked out to insure dryness and resonance. After that comes the carving and coloring, and sometimes the inlaying of mother-of-pearl.

To play it a native beats a staccato with a long slender pole held loosely in his two fists. Thus these savages have a swift and sure wireless system. The sound carries for many miles. Nights in New Guinea are palpitant with the booming of

garamuts. A message goes out from a village—a broken rhythm, beaten into the darkness. It ceases for a second, as if for a breath, and then is taken up again insistently. Finally it is silenced, and only the lesser monotones prevail. Then from a different point in the brooding hills comes the answer, a fitful tattoo intelligible to the savage black hordes but utterly beyond us, the handful of Europeans huddled in the valley.

Sometimes, out there, you love the sound of the big garamuts and the smaller kundus; it melts with the wizardry of moon-hung, fragrant nights, and its steady monotone soothes your indolent brain. But there are other times when the maddening insistence of the throbbing drums seems to beat into your consciousness like a trip-hammer. Yet it is always there, the heartbeat of New Guinea; there is no shutting it out . . . *zuhm-zuhm-zuhm* . . . always there . . . always there. . . .

Now, after many months away from the islands, the beat is still in my ears, or my brain—almost as clearly as when I dwelt on the jungle's edge. Now, as I write about it, I can hear the hollow beat. I think it will never entirely leave me. And I don't know whether its insistence is warning me to stay here where I was born, or is irrevocably calling me back. I don't know—yet.

It was meal-time at Awar village—four o'clock; and, the excitement of our advent waning, the men of the village gradually retired to a stilt-raised, covered platform. The planter was still trying to buy saccs; there seemed plenty of it stacked in beautiful pink piles here and there. So his wife and I strolled over to a long grass roof under which a group of marys were busy. This was the house-cook; the big meal of the day was in preparation. On a long table of bamboo

poles were rows of elliptical wooden bowls, elaborately carved, "boys' " bowls, each filled with glutinous gray saccas. In the cooking it had lost its pinkness. On top of each bowl, arranged with surprising daintiness, five little raw silver fish radiated from a sprig of herb. The bright-eyed women pressed around the two of us, eager to touch us. The planter's wife they knew; indeed, one of them carried a hurt arm in a sling which the white woman had made not long ago. Here, as the world over, hospitality made its gracious gesture in the offer of food. It took all our combined tact to convince the chattering marys that we were not hungry. Attractive as the presentation was, I could not eat the slimy cooked saccas.

But the men were squatted on the platform waiting to be fed. In a procession the women carried to them their carved bowls. I followed. Melanesian men are ugly! Their mouths were filthy from betel-nut, and their discolored teeth but snags. Their bodies were almost without exception afflicted with kuskus, a scaling ringworm infection. Some of them had placed on the platform beside them a loathsome cud of betel-and-lime, to be resumed after *kaikai*. Their faces were welted with tribal markings, sinister and dour in expression, with none of the eager good-humor of the little brown women who ministered to them.

In the center of the dais reposed a huge, beautifully carved bowl, piled a foot high with snowy, delicious shredded cocoanut. To eat with, each horrendous male was equipped with a segment of iridescent mother-of-pearl—a carved, shimmering, color-lit thing of great beauty. A spoon, this, such as I had never seen before. For drink, there was the cool and tingling liquid of *koolau* (young cocoanut), quaffed from a hole in the top of the green gourd. Such, then, is the principal meal of Awarians.

The other white woman and I strolled back to the shelter where the marys were again collected, followed by a flock of wide-eyed pickaninnies. One mite possessed herself of me; she seemed enchanted, and kept her small nose glued now to my arm and again to my hand, in which I carried a handkerchief. Thought I: "I have made a conquest of this small jungle person! She finds much in me to be admired and liked!" I said that here was a discerning young heathen. But, alas, my ego was deflated with a bang. She did not love me; she loved the eau de cologne which I had used on my handkerchief and arms. I had ceased to be conscious of its fragrance, but it was a new and entrancing odor to her; so I offered her my handkerchief. She unceremoniously snatched it without a thank-you, and betook her tiny self to parts unknown.

Some of the marys were busy making themselves new wardrobes. The Rue de la Paix is no more concerned with the hang and set of a garment than is the bush woman of the effect of her pulpul. Bunches of ribboned palm fronds hung drying from the cross-poles of the roof. Some older women squatted on the ground, working away on the dried grass.

A pulpul involves little expense but considerable labor. Pandanus palm fronds must be cut and gathered. Then the palm fingers are teased with long-toothed wooden combs into soft silky fringes of almost hair-like fineness. Then the yellowing fringes are hung up to bleach and dry, and they must be well dried or they will not dye properly. Then comes the coloring process, done with pigments made of berries and barks. Splendid effects are achieved, and patterns vary; sometimes the skirt is henna or brown; sometimes the tiers contrast; occasionally the whole is in stripes of contrasting colors, or in a checkerboard effect.

A grass skirt is usually made in two panels, one front and one back, leaving the thighs exposed. In Awar, the front apron is made of two tiers, reaching to the knees; and the back apron, very bushy and composed of two or three tiers, stops half-way between knees and ankles. Worn very low on the hips, this gives a beautiful, most elegant, bustled effect, and switches gently with every lithe step of the slender figure. The body of a Melanesian girl is likely to be beautiful; her back is well-shaped, the muscles playing visibly under her smooth brown skin when she walks. Her full bosom is firm, her gait is that of freedom. The lacework of tattooing actually beautifies the brown skin, and she holds her head high. But when she has borne a child, and when years of labor to keep her man in food have bent the well-set head and made flabby the rounded breasts, she is not lovely to look upon. Nor when missionaries and white administrators have covered up the charming body in calico mother-hubbards.

I bought a new pulpul for a few sticks of trade tobacco. But it wouldn't go around me, a fact which caused shrieks of merriment from the crowd.

When this hilarious interlude had died, the planter's wife looked down in response to a timid tug at her hand, and a pleading little dark face besought "Teep!" I had suspected my friend's uncommonly white and even teeth; for, having lived for some time among Australians, I had discovered that false teeth were the usual equipment. Without hesitation she lowered her full set of store teeth. Although she had done the miracle for the benefit of this company often before, there rose another gale of delighted, amazed, fearful shrieks. With thumb and forefinger many attempted to pull down their own blackened teeth. Ridiculous as it sounds, in this ability



to take out her teeth, this white woman in head-hunting territory had a very real hold on the encroaching natives. To them it was supernatural, it placed her apart from their own kind, empowered her with a tambaran for which they had a wholesome respect and fear.

Across the bend of the river lay another outskirts of Awar village. A little mary volunteered to take us there in an outrigger. Grateful for the cool shade, we waited while she fetched her canoe. The river wound a lazy, serpentine course, overhung with palm and rank jungle. Ginger flowered in scarlet amid the dark green along the banks; in the water was a fishing stockade, with an opening just wide enough for an outrigger. As we waited, a young kanaka woman, large with child, idled down the trail, puffing at a china trade pipe and regarding us without concern. We spoke to her in pidgin, but she seemed not to understand, and we knew that she spoke only her own tribal tongue. However, she smiled at us, and seating herself on the prone trunk of a tree dangled her feet in the water as happily as a child. But well she knew the language of a gift, and took our proffered cigarette. A native never says "thank you," nor, for that matter, do they seem to know the quality of gratitude. A gift is phlegmatically taken for granted.

The outrigger was a tippy affair—a narrow, hollowed-out tree-trunk. The opening in it was just wide enough for me to squeeze in my feet, and I sat gingerly on a cross-pole. But the canoe was a work of art; around it ran an elaborately carved border, and the bow was a realistic alligator's head. The paddle too was topped with a wooden alligator. I sat very still, for I knew that the river harbored these flesh-and-blood creatures.

On the far bank, behind the bend, waited the entire other

village—a small replica of the luluai's. They knew, somehow, of our coming. A kanaka loves to have his picture taken. I selected some of the best—that is, worst-looking—among the men, and stood them in a row, whereupon there ensued among them much nudging and laughter and back-handed wiping of filthy mouths. But were we posed and ready? No. One of them beckoned to his little mary, and as she approached he extracted from his mouth a disgusting, half-masticated mass of betel-nut. She obligingly cupped it in her hand, I snapped the picture, and she gave her lord back his cud.

The shadows were lengthening, and regretfully we turned to go. Hanging from a roof-pole I saw a pandanus woven basket, and over its edge protruded five little pinky-brown toes. I examined it more closely, and found therein a brown cherub sleeping and sucking his fist in white-baby fashion.

"'Im 'e pickaninny belong you?" I asked of a bright-eyed mary standing close.

"Yessah! 'Im 'e belong me!" she said shrilly and very proudly.

I barely touched the toes with my cheek. "Now, me tink 'im 'e good fella too much!" And she was pleased in quite the universal manner that I liked her baby.

One and all they saw us off. By now the river ran pink with sunset. As our outrigger rounded the bend we called: "Yacoq!" (Farewell!)

The answering "Yacoq!" drifted on to us, though I could not see them any more.



XIX

RIVER OF DEATH

THE very name of the Sepik River stirs vague, fantastic imaginings in the minds of the white people living in New Guinea, even if they never expect to go there. It is a Never-Never, a goblin-haunted region, like a bad land of a fairy tale. It is sometimes luridly spoken of as "The River of Death"; in Rabaul, however, where many irreverencies occur, we call it the "Septic." Stray recruiters, D. O.'s on patrol, and rare explorers into the Sepik country sometimes come back with tales of a pigmy race. .

Natives of the Sepik country cling steadfastly to their story that a race of people with tails dwells back in the jungle. There are no monkeys of any kind in New Guinea, so they have not confused men with apes. On the theory that where there's smoke there's fire, I have heard anthropologists in the South Pacific say that probably some tribal custom gives the appearance of natural tails. Natives can think of curious ways to render themselves different from their neighbors. But this particular mystery of a tailed human being has yet to be fully explained.

So on the schooner *Nulua* we set out again, early in the morning, for Marienberg, that lone mission station in the very heart of darkest New Guinea, on the bank of the Sepik River. I don't know just why, but for me the Sepik had reared itself

as the most desirable of all spots to achieve. Perhaps because it had seemed impossible for me to get there. Only two white women had ever traveled up the Sepik River before me. I should have liked to be the first woman to enter the Sepik, instead of the third, but even this gave me a thrill.

From Awar we sailed along the coast of New Guinea for several hours, when, at his plantation, we dropped Elking. Jim and Brearly, alas, we should soon drop at Marienberg. By this time we could dimly see the mouth of the Sepik, could just make out an outline of what looked like upright poles of a far-stretching stockade, half a day's sail away. Of us all aboard the *Nuloa* only Jim and Brearly had ever been up the great river. And yet there was an undercurrent of excitement in every one of us, even the mate. Jim had been all the way up to Ambunti, three hundred miles or so, the last outpost of the white man's world, and the only other government station in the Sepik country save Marienberg. The Ambunti station had been established only a few years before. There three white men hold their own against the fiercest of New Guinea head-hunters by grace of the superstitious awe that a white man inspires in the unsophisticated native. I don't know why men choose this voluntary exile; there is pitifully little in it for them materially or otherwise.

At Ambunti, Jim says, it thunders much of the time; the world seems continually to growl, and lightning flashes with maddening frequency. It wrecks the nerves of whites stationed there. I know that at Ambunti the government station is built on a high hill at the end of a range of mountains. The wind sweeps around this range with terrific force, and Ambunti is caught as if in a pocket. Almost nightly thunder and lightning storms occur, accompanied by wind so violent

that government officials have been known to sit on the hillside in the driving rain watching this lightning play around their bungalows and expecting to see, when the next flash came, that some swaying house had been blown down the hillside. The bungalows have to be made secure to the ground with ropes of lawyer vine.

About thirty miles below Ambunti, in the bend of the stream, is a large whirlpool; here the mighty river is six hundred yards wide, and at times the whirlpool almost reaches from bank to bank. Neither boat nor canoe ever attempts to break through it, but at times the natives allow their canoes to be carried around the outer fringes while they spear fish. On one occasion the schooner *Gabriel*, caught in the whirlpool, was carried completely around the circle before being able to break clear.

The current of the Sepik is very swift as it carries out to sea, and as far back as the volcano Manum we found that the ocean was discolored with muddy overflow. As we gradually approached, we could clearly define a channel of driftwood and small logs that had been emptied from the great river's mouth. Slowly the upright objects that lend this stockade effect to the horizon evolved into tall, straight trees on the swampy banks; behind these are sago swamps, and behind them is well-nigh impenetrable jungle.

Then, at last, the mouth of the river! It is four hundred feet wide and ninety feet deep. As we made a beautiful, wide turn in, I could feel the surge of the swift current against the schooner. The skipper snapped his directions to the boy at the wheel, and the engine battled almost futilely against the rushing waters. The rest of us leaned forward anxiously; and when I saw that we were now between the swamp and the jungle banks of the river, I felt as if we had

entered a great portal that had swung to behind us. The laughing green sea back of us, even the outline of an active volcano now dim against the sky, seemed friendly things.

What I saw from the schooner was a flat jungle landscape, dark green and dank, with many coves; the vista of the river ahead of us was obscured because of the incredible windings of its course. Occasionally along the shore a grass hut, shaped like an igloo, peered from among the rank growth, surrounded by a few tall, thin, feathery-topped palms; sometimes we could distinguish straight brown naked forms poised as if in wary amazement along little beaches. Through the binoculars they were grim, muscular men, usually armed with a spear. The *Nuloa* was three times the size of any other craft that had ever entered the river. We were within the precincts of head-hunters.

The fast current carries down an unending jumble of driftwood; sometimes logs come down in almost solid mass. The river now was reasonably clear of debris, but this danger, combined with the compass-addling twistings of the river's course, and occasional mud-banks, made navigation at night so dangerous that after proceeding for about five miles we cast anchor until dawn.

We had come prepared to encounter clouds of mosquitoes; no place in New Guinea has as bad a name for these pests as the swampy shore of the Sepik. Before entering its mouth, Elisa had trotted about rigging mosquito nets over our respective bunks. My own, incidentally, was borrowed from Meg Long, and neither she nor I had known when I took it that it was full of great holes.

We anchored at sundown. The mosquitoes were not due for a while yet, so after an early and hasty supper we adjourned to topdeck while there was yet peace. Having grown

tired of nondescript attire, for my own morale I put on a lovely green chiffon frock. I love green, and I love floaty, feminine dresses. Even on a South Pacific schooner chiffon has its place. My male companions liked it. The skipper said: "Look who's here. That's a pretty frock." Jim looked as if he were sorry he was going bush. I felt very happy up a head-hunting river, in green chiffon, and paraded like a peacock for them to see how I looked. I don't believe any one had ever worn green chiffon up the Sepik River before.

And the mosquitoes never showed up. By some miracle, for three days up the Sepik River the wind was in such a direction that we were almost unconscious of the pests.

With one stride night followed on the heels of sunset; a light trade breeze playing about the *Nulua* brought comfort; billions of little stars prickled the sky. I am sure that that night the music of the spheres must have been like the prickly sweetness of a Swiss music box. We lounged about on the topdeck; I in a big wicker chair (we now possessed but two chairs, for we had left one at Awar); the mate and engineer stretched out in solid comfort on the long iron bench; Brearily draped across a skylight; Jim balanced, at danger of life and limb, on a rail, winding his long legs around it in some impossible manner. The skipper brought up his mattress and a pillow, and clad in pajamas stretched out in luxury. Certainly there never was a more comfortably, blissfully contented group of people than we.

The Scotch engineer was moved to expression: "And some people pay money to do just this!" I myself was utterly content with life, under this open sky. I wondered why more people did not consider the world well lost to search out, and know, this peace. It was all so easy, when you came right down to it, to find your way across the earth. The path

lay so straight from hard pavements, time-clocks, and vertical cities, to this place where the world was dewily young. (Anticlimax: if the mosquitoes had been about, my thoughts would have been less serene.)

Sleepily, one by one, the skipper, mate, and engineer went below, until only Jim and Brearly and I were left on top. The two recruiters talked of their forthcoming mad expedition into uncontrolled and unmapped territory. If they felt any doubts or misgivings, they did not voice them. Both knew that the consensus of opinion was that they were committing folly, probably suicide, to attempt an expedition into the interior with horses and a minimum of native carriers. They knew that they were to encounter swift-running, alligator-infested rivers, swamp country, weary expanse of kunai plains, jungle where every step would have to be cut clear, range after range of mountain, and hostile natives.

It was to be a six months' expedition. They had planned to take with them two or three months' supplies, leaving the rest at the mission at Marienberg. They would return to Marienberg with their recruits, concentrate them there, replenish their supplies, and go again to the hinterland. Jim also believed that the expedition should net several hundred native recruits, and up in the gold fields prospectors would use all the recruits that could be supplied. If he and Brearly could "sign on" six hundred recruits, at £20 (\$100) each, their respective fortunes were pretty well made. Jim was confident that they could take horses into the hinterland, and each horse would equal six or eight natives as a carrier. Though their plan had seemed to me, too, an utterly crazy thing, nevertheless while I listened to the two men discussing the expedition, casually and quietly and apparently prepared to cope with the vicissitudes before them, I

began to wonder whether these two pioneers, stepping determinedly in where all others had feared to tread, might not be right.

And there was more to it than recruiting. Jim had a notion that he knew where to locate oil deposits. There is oil in the Sepik region. Just above Marienberg a deposit had been found, and two engineers were camped there when we finally arrived at the mission station. But again, as with all of New Guinea's interior riches, no practical way had yet been found to transport the heavy and complicated equipment necessary to wrest them from the brooding jungle. Jim, too, knew where there was blue clay, and blue clay may mean diamonds.

We sat for an hour or more, talking; I stretched out in the wicker chair, now brought over to the rail. Brearly sat on deck, his knees clasped in his hands, and his head against my knees. Jim, bless him, in the chair next to me, his big pioneer's hands encasing one of mine. To-morrow we should be in Marienberg, and in another day or two we three who had become distinctly fond of each other would say good-by forever. None of us knew when we should find our way back to civilization again, if ever. Not that we worried about it, for wandering over the world makes a fatalist of a body. Still, it wasn't a happy thought just then that I should probably never know what eventually happened to Jim and Brearly, nor they of me.

Brearly, feeling low with a touch of fever, disappeared, to return shortly with mattresses and pillows, which he spread on the deck and upon which he stretched himself for the night. But first he placed one of the pillows at the back of my chair for my head.

Jim and I talked on quietly. At length I said: "And when you're through with this expedition, Jim, then what? You'll have money, and there'll be no need to stay in the Territory any longer."

"I'll go down south, spend a lot of money recklessly, and probably be broke in a couple of years. Then I'll come back again to New Guinea."

"But what will New Guinea do to you in the end, Jim? We know what it does to those that let their lives lie out here. You can't come back, always."

"Yes, I shall come back, always. I've tried staying away—twice. It will be New Guinea's way of getting even with me. I am going out here to make my fortune out of human lives; to persuade native boys and men to sign themselves away to a foreign master for a term of years. They'll get a few trinkets out of it; I'll get a fortune, if I live and succeed. There's a balance to be evened up. You rarely get anything for nothing in this world."

Jim was looking reflectively out over the dark river to the shore, where a signal fire glowed. The starlight softened his likably homely profile. Except for distant kundus there was no sound around us save the slapping of water against the schooner, and an occasional creak as the swift current moved it around a point or so. For a moment I saw New Guinea's chastisement of Jim. I saw him alone in all this great expanse of mountain and jungle, alone forever, spiritually and bodily. I saw, and sadly, what the years would do to this man who was cast of such excellent stuff. Are there not those pitiable derelicts in Rabaul who were once strong and straight and adventurous, before they sold their souls to this land?

Once you let the tropics and the jungle places get under

your heart, they've got you. Then one's life is like those tropic trees whose roots grow down from the branches to the waiting earth. Once the seed germinates and flourishes, there is no stopping the eager roots; no matter how far you grow, they will shoot forth and grow until they reach the ground again. Pruning them, tearing them away, does no good, as long as the tree itself stands.

Jim knew that this was so, and I knew that for him it was so.

Recruiting of natives for the broad purpose of obtaining labor that New Guinea may be built up and carried forward, is one thing. Persuading men to leave their jungle villages, severing the tie with their own kind, for the nefarious purpose of making money out of the traffic, is something else. Jim despised himself for it. He told me so, for he was a kindly man; but where the white man forces his way, there stalks his lust for gold. Jim was a sinner against the code of brotherhood, he must pay the penalty. He might leave this land, glad to put behind him the enervating, voluptuous beauty of it, along with all its sordidness; he might go back to his normal environment and companionships; he might even find the love that every human being needs to fulfil life. But eventually the dank, sweet smell of the jungle, the aching desire for its strangeness and stillness, the wanting of its cool wild rivers and its unusual dangers, these will draw him as inexorably as the moon draws the tide. And he must leave everything to find them again.

I know, because as I write this there is a great longing within me to go back. I want it all again so terribly. But Jim was infinitely closer to New Guinea than ever I have been.

I echoed him forlornly: "You're right, Jim. We get nothing for nothing."

He said not a thing. But for a second he laid his cheek against my arm, like a lonely boy.

After a decent interval, I suggested: "Wouldn't some sandwiches taste fine?" And he betook himself obligingly down to Elisa's precincts to make some for us.

It must have been eleven when we heard the engine of a schooner bringing up behind us. The hurrying putt-putt of it was some distance back, beyond innumerable twistings and turnings of the river. A schooner on the Sepik at any time is an event; to hear one bearing down upon us at night, unseen and unexplained, had all the elements of a thrill. Jim and I leaned over the rail, straining our eyes to see who might be thus hastening up the treacherous river under cover of darkness. Soon the schooner not only appeared, its mast lights shining high and clear, but drew alongside of us, and by the light of a couple of hurricane lamps fastened itself with lines to the *Nuloa*. Then the thick-spectacled, bearded, kindly face of Father Kirschbaum peered up from the *Gabriel*. He had been up the coast, and was returning to Marienberg, as sure of his course as a homing pigeon.

We all knew of him by hearsay, but Jim and the huge missionary were old friends. He climbed aboard by the simple means of stepping from the deck-rail of his schooner up and over the lower deck-rail of ours. Jim left me unceremoniously, charming as I was, and together they disappeared for a while into the skipper's cabin. Twenty minutes later Father Kirschbaum climbed down once more to the *Gabriel*, calling back a cordial welcome for us when we should arrive at Marienberg the next day. The little *Gabriel's* staunch

engine began functioning amid the usual excitement of her native crew, as she set out fearlessly up the river once more.

It was high time to be asleep. And so I took over to Brearly the pillow he had placed behind my back, and went below to my tiny cabin.





XX

SKY PILOT OF THE SEPIK

AT daybreak the *Nulua's* engine, rudely aroused, coughed, sputtered, and then grudgingly took on a steady job. Going up the Sepik is not an everyday event even to those who live in New Guinea, so all hands appeared on deck shortly after the schooner resumed her tussle with the swift current. Night, shrouding all things in mystery, had catered to the popular fancy that this river was a dread enigma. Now, in the sane light of day, the river banks were disappointing, almost uninteresting.

Nevertheless, I gulped once or twice in sheer excitement at being here in this fabulous place on an October morning.

What I saw was a broad, winding waterway, quite dismally bordered with swamp, tall grass, sago palms, wild sugar, and stunted timber. But the background was of forbidding, endless, mighty ranges of mountains. Jim told me that not far inland were many lakes, where wild bird life abounded. Occasionally we saw a few grass huts on tall stilts, dejected and solitary enough, and once in a while there was a very long slender canoe, curiously without an outrigger, drawn up along the shore. Each of these harbored four or five statue-like natives, who obviously were out early in the morning collecting sagsac from the swamps. The naked natives stared, motionless, with long paddles poised, as we passed them.

We approached Marienberg about noontime. As we pulled alongside of what purported to be this famous mission station I looked for something indicating human habitation. There was no wharf of any kind, nor was any needed. We drew up to the bank that dropped as sheerly down to the water as if it had been cut away, and two of our native crew leaped out and tied the *Nuloa* to stakes driven into the ground apparently for that precise purpose. Then the bank, over which the water rises at high tide, was flush with our lower deck-rail. All that was necessary to negotiate the shore was to step on the rail and then over a twelve-inch hiatus to the ground.

Marienberg was a most desolate place. Only five white men were living there. Three caved-in shed "storehouses," as Robbie called them, were the only signs of dwellings. One of these had once been the D. O.'s house. But the acting D. O. was there to greet us. I had heard of him, too; he was easily the most popular man in the islands. His last name was abbreviated by every one to "Robbie." He had been stationed at several posts throughout the Territory, and had successfully executed his job in all of them; and when this

terribly lonely and very dangerous vacancy occurred, Robbie had applied for it.

He was entirely different from any one I had seen in the Territory. Robbie was English, not an Aussie, and he was tall, with a beautifully shaped head on which grew the fair, wavy hair that women like in men. If he sees this description of him he will hate it, and he will probably detest all future women travelers in New Guinea. But I can't help it, for Robbie was such a romantically good-looking young man. He had large, disarming blue eyes that looked at the world with seeming ingenuousness and entirely undisturbed. He had a curiously slow and drawling manner of talking, an amusing habit of repeating a sentence, as if for his own benefit. And Robbie was, at soberest, in a continual state of mellowness.

But if his exterior gave the impression of softness and dreaminess, it was misleading. He was the one lone white man there who represented the Government to hundreds of the cruelest and most unruly people of New Guinea. By some strange genius, or hidden strength, he commanded the respect and obedience of the head-hunters. In the Sepik country only the very fringe is rated as "controlled area." Obviously fearless, Robbie struck me as one of those persons to whom nothing really matters—life, death, misfortune, danger, nothing. He had built him a kunai (grass) house on a knoll back from the bank.

How many times during the year and a half of my South Pacific adventure did I metaphorically pinch myself and think, like the good woman in Mother Goose: "Laws a-massy on us, can this be really I!" At times I found myself where few white men, and no other white woman, had ever been—I, the whilom insignificant struggler in a vast city, the usual

commonplace, middle-class person making up nine tenths of "civilized" society.

Our arrival had attracted a strange gallery. First a very long and narrow canoe put out from the opposite bank, and gradually, warily approached our schooner. It held five standing figures in fantastic silhouette—two men, two marys, and a pickaninny. After a while they grew brave enough to make for the mission bank. Other canoes then put out from the shore across the river, keeping a safe distance from the biggest ship they had ever seen, or perhaps dreamed of, and steadying their canoes with their tall paddles. The marys maneuvered the canoes, while the men sat at ease. Some of these log-hewn crafts carried eight natives.

Theoretically, wherever the white man's rule has penetrated, the natives have been weaned from their cannibalistic habits, but it seemed that he had impressed these river people with little else. The men wore merely a brief garment consisting of a wide tight fiber girdle with a tiny bark-cloth apron in front, and their necks bristled with the precious dog-tooth necklaces. All the male heads wore a weird adornment; the wool was confined into a woven conical head-dress, through which it protruded in a black bush. These "hats" were elaborately trimmed with shell money (tambaran) and carved sharks' or dogs' teeth, and each was crowned with the fur of a flying fox. The head-dress is an evidence of dignity; it is one of the acquirements of a youth when he reaches "manhood" and lets his wool grow, and it is nevermore taken off.



The marys were more elaborately be-decked. Each woman's wool was done into tiny corkscrew curls, stiffened with henna clay. They wore finely teased-out grass pulpuls, very short in front and swish-

ing to below their knees in back, as at Awar. Around their necks they, too, wore carved tooth necklaces, and between the tattooed breasts of each of them hung a great disk of mother-of-pearl as big as a tea plate.

It took some time for the occupants of the tentatively approaching canoes to gain enough confidence in this strange new invasion of their territory to make the mission shore and clamber up to the ground. They observed the six of us from the *Nuloa* with open-mouthed curiosity.

So far as Melanesia can boast a purely native cultural or art center, the Sepik River region is it. Some of its wood-carving is marvelous, considering that Stone-Age implements are still in use there. The canoes, which have no outriggers, are splendid examples of careful, patient workmanship. They are very long, perhaps thirty feet, and are elaborately carved from stem to stern; each has a figurehead of a pukhpukh (alligator) or pig, both of which are sacred beasts.

Robbie was undeniably glad to see us. Except for the two missionaries, and the two men at the recently established oil company's "headquarters" a few miles up the river, he had seen no other white men for dear knows how long. And the sight of a white woman was rare enough to him to make for me a flattering welcome. He looked immaculately clean and fresh; the sort of man who would keep himself looking that way even if he never saw another of his own kind again. I marveled at the enchantment that could hold him content and happy there during those precious golden days of his youth when, surely, love and life and all the smiling pleasures that the world holds for men that look like Robbie were beckoning across the seven seas. For I believe he was no world-jaded decadent. He was but twenty-eight. And yet

there he stood, a slender bulwark of civilization against the savage tribes.

Father Kirschbaum arrived to greet us shortly after our schooner had tied up alongside the river bank. I was eager to see and know this truly great man, and my glimpse of him in the flickering light of a hurricane lamp the night before had piqued my curiosity all the more. There is no man in the world, I believe, who knows as much about New Guinea in general as Father Kirschbaum, priest, anthropologist, missionary, and fearless adventurer.

He is a huge person, with a bear-like clumsiness which hinders him not at all in penetrating the hinterland; his thick, pointed beard is still untouched with gray, and through monstrously thick spectacles two shrewd and very kindly eyes looked keenly at me. His mouth, seen between dark beard and mustache, was firm and pleasant. He was not garbed in the absurd, long, white, frock-coated outfit and helmet that the German fathers affect in the tropics; he wore nondescript khaki, wore it sloppily and comfortably.

For over twenty years he has labored, sincerely and not in the least sentimentally, among the Sepik head-hunters. He is stern and perhaps even hard when occasion warrants, but he has an underlying humanitarianism that even the untamed natives sense. Nor has he any illusions as to the actual fruits of his labors. Head-hunters still hunt heads in the Sepik area. Without doubt human flesh is still relished; native rites and tambarans flourish. Perhaps Father Kirschbaum believes that souls will reach their god according to their respective lights, and does not take cannibalistic evidences as signs of failure of his mission after twenty-odd years of Christian influence. But where his influence has reached he has fought against evil superstition and bodily disease; and

there is no doubt that he has helped materially in making the shores of the Sepik River safe for other white men who are following the trail he has blazed.

Father Kirschbaum speaks English brokenly; I have an idea that after his quarter-century of exile he speaks his own German brokenly, for his vocabulary sounded to me like a sort of Esperanto of German mixed with pidgin, Australian, and native lingo. But his welcome would have been as heartening in Chinese.

Down to the schooner came one of the oil prospectors—a person who looked as if the world didn't owe him much, whose baggy khaki pants were hitched in place by worn-out galluses, and who sported a straggling mustache and a battered double Stetson. He regarded me with an "Oh-my-God!" expression, and I suspected that he had no use for women. He had jungle-walked five miles since daybreak to see the *Nuloa* come in, it having been heralded by the mysterious native wireless which knows all things. After a few "spots" in the skipper's cabin, he disappeared as silently as an Arab, and I saw no more of him.

There were hours of work ahead of the natives in the unloading of several hundred cases of petrol and Jim and Brearly's impedimenta.

Again I had an opportunity to observe Jim's wizardry with horses. There were eight restless beasts to be transferred from the schooner to dry land. When the time came he didn't even need a gangplank. With a preliminary caress, a magic word, and a lift of the halter, he jumped each horse from the deck to the shore.

Neither of the recruiters had a notion where they were to put up during their two week's sojourn at Marienberg while they were organizing their hinterland expedition. At least,

they had no prearranged plans. They had a tent and mosquito netting. But Robbie collared them before the missionary had a chance and volunteered to put them up. From the beginning it looked as if there would be goings-on for the coming fortnight, until the beer was exhausted.

We were to have the crowd with us for lunch aboard the *Nuloa*; there was just room. Before luncheon there was a high party in the skipper's cabin. It was a little cabin, and stuck around were the few intimate treasures that usually mark pathetically a seaman's attempt at "home"—a picture of his dead wife, a few South Pacific curios, a beautiful little bronze god with turquoise eyes from China. The cabin was separated from the others as successfully as was possible on a schooner, but its doorway opened into the end of the narrow passageway which in turn opened upon the foredeck. Thus the cabin was unhealthily and unpleasantly proximate to our smelly live cargo—two pigs, horses, kanakas, etc. The galley was directly opposite.

With the men congregated below in the skipper's domain, I stretched out on a hatch for a siesta, not wanting to intrude on the celebration. But in ten minutes the mate came on top hunting for me, with an invitation to join the crowd. So, from as unobtrusive a corner of the bunk as possible, I watched silently, save for occasional sounds of amusement, the accelerating celebration. Father Kirschbaum was there, and was no damper on the party, though he took little active part in it. The party itself was liquid (mostly beer) and lyric. Robbie regaled us with what he spuriously claimed as his own composition; despite his usual even, almost *sotto voce* manner of talking, he sang the following dainty thing lustily and diligently to the tune of an old hymn:

Oh, wash me in the water
That you wash your dirty daughter,
And I shall be whiter
Than the whitewash on the wall.

He was very proud of it, and repeated it oft and oft. Finally it became a sort of round-robin chorus.

The huge priest sat, amused and comfortable, contentedly puffing at one of the skipper's cigars. He drank little, a glass of beer perhaps. Good Father Kirschbaum!

Later, while we were at lunch, there came to my ears a strangely familiar sound—the busy putt-putt of a schooner engine bearing down the river. Remembering the sound, I cried: “There’s the *Bonta!*” She pulled up alongside the bank ahead of us, looking absurdly tiny, and we greeted Captain Watson and a tall Australian in shorts and woolen socks. Captain Watson had realized his ambition, and been paid for doing it, for he had taken a chartered cargo up the Sepik three hundred miles to Ambunti, and now was returning to Rabaul.

One is very glad to see old comrades in out-of-the-way places of the world. And he seemed pleased to see me again, and paid me the compliment (now a very safe one) of saying that he was sorry I hadn’t gone up to Ambunti with them.



XXI

GOOD-BY, JIM!

AFTER lunch Robbie gave up the sacred siesta to help me take photographs.

The bushmen were scared of the camera. To them it was some infernal "bokis-belong h'eye." But I found something to make them brave; in their love for bright and shiny things they forgot even fear. The films were packed in tinfoil for tropical use, then sealed in tin boxes, which in turn were gaily put up in yellow cartons. I saw a gleaming, covetous eye directed toward these wrappings, a hand itching to snatch the treasure and make off with it to the jungle. So I ingratiatingly distributed the prizes, but not all the wrappings of a film to a single native, no indeed. One bright and shiny treasure to one kanaka, to heighten the value. It worked. They posed like lambs; they let Robbie pull them this way and that, to group them effectively. They had the unfortunate habit, however, of allowing their jaws to drop in wonder, which lent the expression of an amazed chimpanzee to their already unprepossessing countenances. The marys were less docile about the camera than the men, and even at Robbie's stern command they demurred and would not look amiably at the black box.

Much as I deplore it, there must still be a tourist instinct in me, because now that I was in a strange place I wanted to buy something. I wanted curios. What I craved this time was one of the native hats that all the men wore. One of them wore a particularly handsome hat, lavishly trimmed with little shell tambaran (native money) and carved dogs' teeth, and was crowned with fur of the flying fox. His long black wool, drawn through the tall, conical head-dress, was bushed into a black halo at the exposed end. Robbie told me to keep quiet, he would bargain for me. At first the boy was exorbitant; he wanted several shillings, which he could spend at the mission trade-store, plus a pig. A pig! He must have thought I was buying his mary. Still, I did crave the hat, and I thought I wasn't going to get it. Robbie, after a volley of anathema, turned away from the bargaining savage. My own pidgin English wasn't in the least adequate for the combat. As the D. O. turned away in exaggerated indifference I cried, "Oh, Robbie, pay him what he asks!" "Keep still!" he said. I kept still. We looked at other things.

I bartered for a splendid specimen of Sepik wood-carving. It was an idol (a heathen idol on the very mission grounds), which a benighted savage, drooling betel juice, brought in his arms. As I write, it is looking sullenly at me from an opposite corner. It is carved from quela wood, its hooked nose extends almost to the upper lip, it has a very long head crowned with a carved Sepik hat, its slanted eyes are half closed, and in its small ears are strung shell tambaran. I can see that the original color of the wood from which it was laboriously carved is white, for in this temperate climate of the United States a great crack has split half of the face from forehead to chin, but the figure itself is colored henna.

It wears a small bark-cloth apron. I have no idea what weird singsings, initiations, cannibalistic feasts, and other native rites my idol has looked upon. Whatever its past, it is living a sober and upright life now. I bartered for it five sticks of trade tobacco and a film tin. It is a rare thing, and belongs in a museum; but I am a selfish individual, and it keeps me company, me and my Buka kundu.

I tried to buy a dog-tooth necklace. The marys all wore them, and most of the men. Robbie tried to negotiate with them for me, but the refusal to sell these was almost alarming in its emphasis. Even he didn't press the matter. To the Sepik River people the dog-tooth necklace represents wealth, just as the New Britain natives carry theirs wound around their dangling ear-lobes.

Then the lad with the precious hat edged his way into the crowd. He saw that I had round silver pieces, trade tobacco galore, and silver foil. He couldn't hold out. He came to terms. He forgot the pig, seeing that I didn't have one. And I paid four shillings, three sticks of tobacco, a yellow film carton, and a piece of tinfoil.

But buying the hat was one matter, taking possession was another. It was so firmly fastened into his wool that it had to be cut off with a copra knife. He looked sadly naked and shorn when it was gone. I felt sorry for him; he had lost all his dignity and, I fear, much social and tribal prestige.

~~The hat has been well traveled since that day at Marjan~~
Ug, and thoroughly aired, but still I handle it daintily. Its kanaka smell abides with it. It sits in solitary and altogether incongruous state on a chaste colonial table against a wall of my library. When I look at it I recall a background

of densest jungle, tier upon tier of purple mountains, and the swift current of a mighty river.

§

Robbie invited the whole lot of us back to his house to supper. In the meantime, when the noontime heat had lifted a bit, we went, as the fancy took us, up to Father Kirschbaum's mission house. The two skippers—of the *Nuloa* and the little *Bonta*—trudged up the hill with the priest early in the afternoon. Shortly after that the engineer and Brearly wandered up together. Jim was still checking his cargo, so I waited for him. The mate, as usual, did not leave the schooner.

The mission station lay behind the crest of a sizable hill. We climbed slowly half-way up, and though I was not in the least spent Jim insisted that we rest. We were following a kanaka trail lazily skirting the hillside; ahead of us, dappled with shadows, toiled three chattering bushwomen in swinging pulpuls. In baskets suspended from bands around their foreheads and hanging down their backs, they carried the taro for which they had bartered. I looked down on the river I had come so far to find, rejoicing in it.

Just behind the crest of the hill lay a small bush village, and dominating this clearing with a certain air of benevolence was the long, low, desperately bare mission bungalow—headquarters of the Marienberg mission station. Native women stood in their hut entrances clasping wide-eyed pickaninnies by the hand, watching us pass through their midst. Two little girl tots, in adorable pulpuls which already they had learned to sway with a movement of their hips toddled about the clearing. Here on the mission grounds was little

of the taciturnity evident in the bush kanakas at the river's bank. Father Kirschbaum's influence was apparent at least in the flock adjacent to his bungalow.

He had been watching for us. Now he stepped out on his long and cheerless veranda to greet Jim and me as we slowly approached. As I reached the house the thought gripped me: "Twenty years already in this place, and now the rest of his life!" The mission house was a long, one-story, rambling building, composed of several small, stern, bare rooms, each opening on the veranda. The house was built, however, of timber instead of limbung poles, unpainted, weather-beaten timber. Still, it was a priest's house, and the good father probably didn't even realize that it was wretchedly comfortless. Talking in his patois of pidgin-English-German, he conducted us to his study. It contained a long board table and four cheap chairs from "down south," and an oak-stained bookcase that held thick, mildewed volumes in English and German on anthropology and New Guinea.

The rest of our party greeted us cheerfully. The father offered us his own austere refreshment of lime juice and water. And then, everybody taken care of, the missionary settled down and in great contentment puffed away at a cigar from a box presented by our skipper. Luxuries were few and keenly appreciated up the Sepik.

Precious few white men had found their way up to Marienberg. The two or three recent expeditions into the Sepik country that have recently been accomplished did not come that way until many months later. Now that the eyes of science have been turned toward New Guinea it is quite possible that Father Kirschbaum will play host with compara-

tive frequency. He may like it, or he may not; he is not a gregarious soul. I am glad I met the Sepik and Father Kirschbaum before airplanes and wandering scientists make the achievement a casual affair.

While we were listening to the father, a tall, very odd-looking man—odd because of the peering expression that his monstrosly thick spectacles gave his eyes—passed the doorway. His shoulders were stooped, or perhaps his head merely bent forward, in the manner of myopic people who are always regarding objects with unnatural intensity. He looked in at us—I am sure that he had come especially to join the crowd—but after a glance he retreated. I think he couldn't cope with the presence of the lady. He was Brother Joaquin, Father Kirschbaum's assistant, generally known as "the Bruder." He used to be a butcher back in Germany; now he is a missionary, as well as an anthropologist of parts.

I met him later; Jim and I came upon him on a corner of the veranda, where he was intently examining a dead moth. He avoided looking at me, possibly not conscious of the fact. He seemed a dull, hulking clod, but I knew that he was very brilliant and entitled to much respect. Well, he would have a lot of time to study anthropology and moths along the Sepik. More power to him!

There is no doubt that Father Kirschbaum's influence in many ways has been great in the wild Sepik country, though he has opened the way for other white men who are less scrupulous and wise. One white man penetrating the hinterland may make the way of the next easy or hard. Too often white men who visited villages in the hinterland have shown no respect for native tradition, etiquette, or custom;

they have stolen priceless treasures from the ghost-houses, plundered or taken advantage of the natives, or, worst of all, have involved themselves with the marys, or allowed their own natives to philander, and have escaped. Some later white man has to pay the penalty, for the offense is never forgotten until there is a "pay-back." It may be years before another white man comes that way, but upon his head, if it is humanly possible, will be heaped the pent-up wrath of the village.



I asked Father Kirschbaum whether he considered that his long years of labor among these people had achieved any spiritual effect among them. Shrugging his shoulders, he said he admitted neither success nor failure there. Sometimes, he said, he thinks he has made an impression, whereupon the "black-bokis" skin will appear as a proud adornment on the very mission grounds—the symbol of the killer. Thus, time after time, does the ingenuous native raise the suspicion that he is all untouched by the years of patient labor for his soul.

§

The Sepik River people do things in a big way. Each village has its ghost-house, house-tambaran, which is a tremendous structure fifty or sixty feet high and sometimes two hundred feet long, built of palm thatch. Great carved poles uphold the roof, which extends far out over the entrance, giving a dim, cavernous effect to the interior; also the unpleasant suggestion of a crocodile's wide-open jaws. On either side of the ghost-house is usually a large stone, frequently of beautiful blue basalt. These are "sacrifice stones";

after a raid, resulting in at least one victim, a piece of the unfortunate captive's flesh is placed under a stone to appease the spirit, or tambaran, dwelling within it.

Ghost-houses are only for men, and heavy penalty would befall the woman who dared enter the sinister, sacrosanct building. The roof is decorated with rows of skulls; hundreds of skulls adorn the interior, together with sacred carvings, weapons of dead warriors, bamboo war-pipes, masques, kundus, and garamuts, which are used in their frequent feasts, dances and singsings.

The most famous product of the Sepik country is skulls. Time was when they were comparatively easy to acquire, but the Government has forbidden any one to bring, without official permission, a human skull out of the Sepik district, on penalty of fine, imprisonment, etc. And very properly so, because while nothing on earth could persuade a native to part with one of the sacred skulls from a ghost-house, he would obligingly kill friend or enemy, and truss up his head, for a few sticks of tobacco or a bright trinket.

Intertribal warfare is continually going on just as it was a thousand and more years ago. They fight with bamboo-tipped, poisoned arrows, deadly, sure, and swift. A victorious band of raiders sever the heads of their victims, and, leaving the hair thereon, smoke them, having filled the skull with clay; then the eye-sockets are filled with shells or mother-of-pearl, the heads are painted in fearful and ghastly design, and the hair is dressed in long twists plastered with mud, grease, and oil.

A ghost-house trimmed with a few hundred of these pleasant little trophies must be one jolly place to hang around in. About the only advantage that a New Guinea mary enjoys, so far as I can see, is that she is not expected, or per-

mitted, to take part in the pleasures of the ghost-houses. I wonder . . . I wonder if a New Guinea *mary* has *ever* been curious or courageous enough to buck tradition and sneak into a ghost-house. If she ever did and was discovered, she doubtless underwent the most hideous punishment for the sacrilege. We have no parallel for the heinousness of the crime of a native woman entering a men's club-house in New Guinea. The women firmly believe that if they merely gazed upon a trophy they would die.

Father Kirschbaum showed us a "one only" photograph, taken by himself of something which probably no other white man had ever laid his eyes upon. He took the photograph in the native village of Topher, up the Little Ramu River, took it in a ghost-house. This was the marvelous photograph of a complicated tapestry of brilliantly colored feathers—a vast thing that stretched entirely across the rear of the ghost-house. The two central figures were, quite obviously, male and female deities, and surrounding them were symbols and pictures of bewildering variety and detail. Even from the black and white print I could sense the beauty and brilliancy of this great tapestry. This is for the eyes of the fully initiated only. Women, or even novitiates, never gaze upon it, for it is the most sacred of the village's tambarans. It is a supreme example of the art of a curiously creative and imaginative people.

There are three great initiations for a boy of the coastal Sepik region. The first is when the pickaninny emerges into boyhood, when he is given the *mal*, a brief loin-garment of bark-cloth. Then, at the age of fourteen, there is another singsing, and the boy gets a new *mal*; now, too, he is instructed in blowing the tambaran (tambaran here meaning the long bamboo flute that is sounded in war times).

And now—oh awful, breathless moment!—he sees some of the lesser carved effigies from a ghost-house, and from this day on he is allowed to enter the house-tambaran.

Upon the third initiation the youth achieves full manhood. He is taught the final mysteries of the tribe, and has a voice in the common council, being at this period about twenty years old. As if all these dignities were not enough, he is permitted to wear the tall hat, such as I wheedled out of that poor soul at Marienberg.

At the time of the third initiation the young men are instructed in the arts of the village, such as wood-carving, the curing of skulls, construction of their houses, playing on the tambaran, the fine points of warfare, and various village customs. When they are considered proficient in these pursuits and arts, a big singsing is held, when the new-made "men" are adorned with the ornaments they have made during their novitiate. They have built a ghost-house of their own which belongs to them as long as they live, and which is gradually decorated with skulls and trophies won by its members.

Then comes the truly big event. They are men grown, but now they have to go out and prove themselves, for tribal custom decrees that a young man may not marry until he has become a killer and brought back the victim's head. It is when he has killed another man that the dignity of the black skin of the flying fox is conferred upon a Sepik young buck. A boy who has killed and brought back a skull may wear the black skin, even though he has not received the final rites of initiation. He is a killer, and may take unto himself a wife.

Sepik villages are ruled not by a chief but by a council of old men, although there is usually one man in each council

who sways opinion. Jim said he had often seen a village hold a council of war, the council consisting of old men. This takes place in the ghost-house. A ghost-house has a curious stool



made of a flat round top slightly hollowed in the center. It is on four carved legs, and at the back of the stool is the carved figure of a human head with mother-of-pearl eyes and human hair. In a meeting each old man in turn gets up and has his say. There are at hand small bunches of leaves bound together and called "tangets"—four or five of them—and the orating councilor

emphasizes the points of his argument by picking up one of these tangets and flinging it down on the stool. As he concludes his argument he picks up the whole bunch of them and flings them all down at once on the stool. Apparently the stool is not meant to sit on. After all the old men have had their opportunity to speak, the majority rules, and the meeting comes to a silent agreement.

If war is decided upon, the village makes a singsing, after which the warriors set out on the expedition, accompanied by some of the older men carrying the tambarans, hollow wind instruments five or six feet long. The older men scatter when they arrive in the bush, and keep up an infernal racket in order to inspire the warriors with the assurance that the spirits are on their side. If the raid is successful, the entire



overwhelmed village is massacred regardless of sex or age. The heads are severed from the bodies and carried back in triumph to the home territory, while the bodies are left to rot. No captives are taken, and the village is plundered of whatever is considered of value. Upon the return of the victors a great victory singsing is held, and sometimes the heads are thrown under the ladder leading up to the interior of the house-tambaran while the singsing is in progress. They are later buried in the ground till such time as only the skull and bones remain; the skulls are then dug up and remodeled into the original shape with the use of clay, after which the eye-sockets are filled with shells.

Father Kirschbaum says that the religion of the New Guinea natives is undergoing a change. Older generations seem to have believed in a supreme deity; not necessarily a benevolent spirit, just a number one spirit. But the modern belief is generally in totems and tambarans, spirits and devils. A curious conception of life after death is held by the natives of the middle and coastal Sepik region; life will go on in much the same manner as at present, they think, except that

they will have to eat revolting food. It is a very dreary outlook. All the natives seem to have a stoic resignation as to death. They treat it casually no matter how close to them it is. As I have already said, all too frequently they die by autosuggestion, believing that a spell has been put upon them and that there is no combating their fate. So they lie down to die, and they *do* die.

Disposal of the dead varies in different parts of the Sepik region. A middle Sepik custom is to place the body in a small canoe, wrap it in leaves of the lumbum (bush betel-nut), and place it near a fire; then the marys and men of the village plaster themselves all over with clay, squat around the canoe, and mourn loudly, penetratingly, and heartily until the singing feast is exhausted.

All through the Sepik country, when a family or village is in mourning, they cover themselves from head to foot with a very sticky clay, and the period of mourning endures until all the clay has dropped off. I have seen natives in the state of "half mourning," shaggy and filthy with mud; they were repulsive and fearsome apparitions.

Then, again, in some Sepik districts, the dead are eaten. But first a "big-fella-singsing-'e-come-up," and the corpse is properly buried. After burial, the length of time varying with custom, the body is dug up by lapoon marys (old hags) related to the deceased. They cut it up and drop the joints into what are commonly known to us as missionary pots. The ensuing feast is not so much to satisfy hunger as to dispose finally and unquestionably of the unfortunate deceased, that the spirit may not come back and bother them.

A burial is always a big time among natives—always the occasion of a singsing. There is much wailing of women and hoarse, ceaseless chanting of men; there is much beating of

kundus, the drum artists squatted in a circle, their bodies swaying back and forth, their throats emitting strange and ancient songs of which generally they themselves don't know the meaning. The firelight, within the enchanted circle of which evil spirits dare not enter, flickers on dreadfully painted faces and bodies welted with tribal marks. After the burial, frequently the marys lie prone over the grave of the dead relative for days. This prevents the spirit beneath from rising out of the grave.



§

The skipper of the *Nuloa* planned a little dinner party aboard the schooner. The guests were to be Father Kirschbaum, Captain Watson of the *Bonta*, Jim and Brearly (no longer our passengers, alas), and Robbie. It was to be at night, and great doings were under way for the event, for Elisa was to open some tinned asparagus. On the cruise of the *Nuloa* asparagus day was always a red-letter day. The engineer took a shoot-boy and returned to our midst with a dozen fat plover. Jim and Brearly and Robbie couldn't come to the party, however; they had spent the entire afternoon at Robbie's house and were not sober enough to appear.

Nevertheless, by the light of the pendant hurricane lamp the rest of us ate asparagus and stewed plover. Captain Watson told us of his trip with the little *Bonta* up to Ambunti. The skipper of the *Nuloa*, growing a little bleary-eyed and expansive from much beer, gave us many sentimental reminiscences of his life in Suva. The mate said little, but devoted himself kindly to seeing that I had everything I

wanted, and even rolled a cigarette for me from his rank tinned tobacco, which I smoked manfully, and eventually liked. Father Kirschbaum, as usual, quietly and contentedly sat back and listened, puffing at a cigar. The hurricane lamp flickered above a cheerful and well-fed party. The eternal drums of the jungle we heard only when we especially paid attention to them. The vine-bedecked kanaka crew droned an evening singing as they crouched about another flickering lamp on the foredeck.

The pretty girl (vintage of 1910) with blue eyes and flowery hat smiled down at our board from her frame on the cabin wall. A few cockroaches promenaded with an engaging familiarity along the mess-table. It was all very friendly and cozy, that dinner party. After it was over, and the men had retired to the skipper's hot cabin, I carried my large flashlight and my copy of "The Light of Asia" up to the topdeck to read a bit, stretched out on a skylight, and thanked God for a trade breeze and no mosquitoes.

It was about nine-thirty when Brearly appeared, now sober. With his usual charming informality he stepped from the river bank upon the lower deck-rail, and then chinned himself up to the navigating deck. Much as I liked Brearly and deplored the approaching loss of him, I turned reluctantly from Prince Gautama taking poignant leave of his sleeping beloved, and snapped off my "shoot-light." It was good of him to come down to the *Nuloa* to see me . . . but I was wishing it were Jim.

Presently, to gladden me, Jim blew along. Robbie was with him, mellow as usual. But Jim was all right. Robbie waved his hand to me as they went down to the skipper's cabin. But in a little while Jim's lank form loomed up the ladder, and my two cobers and I were together again, for

the last time. Conversation ran to their expedition. Everybody at Marienberg had been very discouraging, even Father Kirschbaum. He knew the good stuff of which these two pioneers were made, but he knew equally well the madness of their undertaking.

Robbie's head appeared above the ladder with an invitation to come down to the skipper's cabin for a "spot." Jim told Brearly to represent us.

Jim smoked the last half of a cigarette in silence. Jim and I liked each other, a liking born of splendid days of riding together out into the New Guinea jungle, days of jolly companionship aboard an idly sailing schooner. Now, quite suddenly, I found myself caught in the steel vice of his arms, and his lips were against my throat. And, almost as suddenly, I was freed again, and the lank bushranger who feared neither crocodiles nor cannibals stood waiting for what might befall him now.

This manifestation of a primal urge was pleasant but dangerous. I said: "Jim, better go home, or down to the party."

"I don't want to. The house will be strange and empty, and I don't want to be alone. And if I go down below I'll get drunk."

"Getting drunk might be good for you, Jim."

"All right. Good-by! I'm hoping that whatever you do is successful."

"The same to you, Jim."

I hated to have him go. He stood looking at me. The unforgettable shag of red hair hung over his forehead. I hated to have him go.

But he didn't go below to the skipper's party. I saw him step over the side of the schooner, and without looking back.

he crossed the little clearing and disappeared along the jungle path toward the D. O.'s house.

The next day the skipper did a little trading with Father Kirschbaum. We swapped him our two pigs for a great lazy sow. She slept continuously beneath the combing of the door on the foredeck, and minded not at all being stepped on or cussed at. She was a horribly lazy pig. We also sold the priest our most comfortable wicker chair. It was the first comfortable chair he had known in twenty-odd years. It had been my chair.

Father Kirschbaum took us all into a padlocked shack that was filled with rare Sepik curios—spears, clubs, carved gourds, masques, shell adornments—and let us plunder to our hearts' content. Many of the things he gave me I still have, but some were stolen by the kanaka crew. It was rich loot for the thieves.

The next morning we set out again toward the northern atolls and the Admiraltys. It rained hard the day we left Marienberg, a forerunner of the northwest monsoons due in full fury within the next few weeks. And how it rains up the Sepik! My transparent raincoat—"a perfect tropical raincoat," sold to me by a famous New York expedition outfitter—gave up the fight early, and I wrapped myself in a piece of sail canvas.

I said farewell to Jim and Brearly wistfully. They had been good company; companions grow strangely dear in circumstances such as had surrounded our journey together. Under the gray rain I strained my eyes, as we rounded the first bend of the river, to see them through the torrent. The last I saw of Jim was his tall, lank form in a dripping raincoat, waving his sombrero.



XXII

BRAVE MATE

WE anchored, late that afternoon, again at the mouth of the Sepik. There was no need to hurry, and outside, beneath the disarming quiet of the Pacific, lay submerged islands and mountain peaks that were better dealt with at daybreak than nightfall. The rain had stopped, leaving the evening sweet.

The *Nuloa* seemed singularly empty; of the sizable crowd that had set out aboard her from Madang, only the skipper, the engineer, and the mate remained, and myself. Even the kanakas seemed a bit forlorn, with the native passengers gone from the foredeck.

Night dropped swiftly and serenely. Out toward sea there was a baleful red glow against the sky—the island volcano.

The engineer and the skipper disappeared below deck, and ten minutes later Captain Alys reappeared in pajamas, clutching his mattress and pillow and sheet in his short arms. He was in one of his moods, and he spread his bed up forward by the binnacle, and stretched out on it. Nobody spoke to him; one mustn't speak to Captain Alys when he fell to

brooding. But I could distinguish the outline of his short, well-set form through the soft dusk, and the glow of his cigarette as he lay looking up at the stars.

We knew he was thinking of his dead wife. Years ago, out in Fiji, he had carried her for months aboard this same schooner, trying to bring her back to sanity and health. I think perhaps it was the memory of her that had influenced the skipper to take me along on this cruise; the thought of having a woman aboard may have made her seem nearer. I think, too, that my presence sometimes sent him into the deep and brooding moods. And then, I suppose, he regretted having weakened in my favor, for nowhere is a man's world more masculine than on a South Pacific schooner. But he never told me so.

The mate and I droned a low-toned conversation about our successful negotiation of the Sepik, and about Jim and Brearly. I related to him all that we had seen and done ashore, for never did he set foot off the schooner. I asked him why that was an inflexible rule of his, and he said that if he went ashore he might get into trouble—might drink. He didn't trust himself. He said: "I've been as low as a man can get; I was working with a pick-ax on roads along with kanakas out in Suva. The Old Man," and he nodded at the sleeping skipper, "found me one day; I'd been his mate once. I wasn't worth much when he came across me in Suva. But he took me on his schooner, signed me on. I didn't think I could pull myself together again. But because a human being took an interest in me when I'd sunk to about the level of swine, I made up my mind I'd try to be a man again."

The mate rolled me a cigarette and passed it over to me. His tobacco was rank, but I had smoked the first ones so

heroically that he was sure I liked them, and would hand me a supply of them from time to time. Gradually I began to acquire a taste for them.

The mate went on: "It was hell, but I did it. For two years I never touched a drop of liquor. Then the skipper here put in an application to take me on as mate. The company was against it. They said I was no good, unreliable. You see, I'd been down so low that even the kanakas had forgot I was a white man. But the Old Man won out. He signed me on as mate, and gave me back my self-respect."

The mate puffed reflectively at his home-made cigarette. His eyes wandered to the sleeping form of the little skipper. I saw something of the stress of battle that had carved the deep lines around his mouth. And I knew pity for the fear of the sleeping devil that still was within him. He was chained to a little South Pacific schooner by invisible links of fear, because he couldn't trust himself abroad. He wouldn't recognize this as a victory; it was merely a compromise. He had seen too much of the world to like it, and in his way he was content. As far as the world was concerned, his life was over. At forty-two.

I don't know what philosophy the mate had worked out for himself, if any; he seemed to have a certain spiritual serenity which perhaps was simply fatalism. But he was a rank atheist. For some reason, the origin of which I never did discover, he always alluded to God as "Old-Hughey-on-Top," or sometimes "Old Hughey."

The mate had been cut in the pattern of splendid men. He had been handsome, was still handsome, for that matter, except for his haggard mouth. Even in dungarees and a woollen shirt, and barefooted, which was his usual appearance, he

looked like a gentleman. To me he was courteous and always kind. In fact, he liked me, and could not help knowing that I liked him.

"The Old Man has his faults, like the rest of us," he went on, "but as long as he wants me I'll stick by him." The mate was from Scotland, and I fell to wondering what had sent him out here.

Putting his tobacco in his pocket, he said, "Well, I guess it's time I turned in."

"Good night, mate."

"Good night, Miss America." He went below.

I didn't want to go to bed, the night was too lovely and gently cool to forsake for a roach-ridden cabin, the stars too bravely white to substitute for a smelly hurricane lamp. I stretched comfortably out in the rickety old arm-chair, my feet on the iron bench along the deck-rail. The monotone of crooning kanakas on the foredeck was a soothing sound, and so was the lapping of water against the schooner. Peace was there, of a tropic night, afloat. And a little of loneliness. My mind wandered back to Dian of the brave heart and humorous violet eyes . . . to Nicki and the moonlit nights in the gardens behind Rabaul, which we had named Gethsemane because of their fantastic loveliness . . . nights filled with such fragrance and deep shadow as brought aching along with blessedness. I remembered, as I have many times since, the minute of elusive beauty there when a slender bamboo leaned before the breath of a vagrant trade wind. I recalled, too, my first finding of certain beautiful words, guided by Nicki as we read together by the combined light of the moon and our "shoot-lamps": "The Dewdrop slips into the shining Sea!"

And what of Nicki? I had heard of him twice via schooner mail while I was in New Ireland. In the first letter he had

genially cursed the whole bloody Territory, and included the rest of the Pacific islands for good measure. The second, just before I left Kaewieng, still breathed of a refreshing misanthropy, but volunteered the information that he might follow the gold rush to Edie Creek. I didn't take to this letter very kindly. But go he would, if he made up his mind, though the devil tagged at his heels.

Now it would be a precious long time before I heard from Nicki or anybody else again. It is a queer feeling to deliberately cut yourself off from all communication with the world.

These thoughts I dwelt upon as my brain gradually trailed off to sleep.

I asked the mate once why he didn't marry, settle down, and stop his futile and ceaseless wandering among the islands. He was just the sort of man who would love to have a woman caring for him, and even fussing a bit over him and making him comfortable. He had had prodigally of the things of youth. He said: "I've done a lot of thinking lately. In ten years I'll be fifty-two, and what will I have in life? No chick or child of my own kind; no one to care whether I live or die. But I can't ask a white woman to marry me now. I've got half-caste children scattered all over the South Seas."

In the course of conversation he told me about the Gilbert Islands and the girl he had loved out there.

It was after he had lost command of a ship in New Zealand that he drifted out to the Gilberts. He set himself up as a trader, even acquired a small cocoanut plantation. He lived there four years among the natives, and for the most part like them. He didn't actually "go native," from which state a white man rarely wrests back either his own self-respect or that of natives or other whites; but he adapted himself to

Micronesian manners and pursuits, and lived garbed in a lap-lap solely, save once every six months or so when a ship called at the islands and he went forth to meet his own kind.

He took a native girl for his mistress. Whenever the mate spoke of Tam-ma he always added, "She was a sweet little kid." She was only about fifteen. And she adored him. Her mother and father, honest Gilbertians, were pleased with the alliance. It is an honor to have a white master attach one's daughter; it brings with it much prestige, even when he has at length deserted her. And the mate and Tam-ma and her parents lived in harmony in a grass house that he built for them. When he took Tam-ma he told her he wanted no children, to which she rather doubtfully acquiesced.

"She had beautiful long straight black hair—it reached half way down to her knees," went on the mate, his eyes back in the Gilberts. "And it was my job, the last thing every night, to plait it into two long braids. She was just a little thing"—his hand indicated the height of his chest—"and only fifteen. But, Lord, she was a sweet little kid!"

Things went on happily between them for a while, but one day Tam-ma came to him and pleaded that she wanted just one baby. She wanted a boy-child, wanted it tearfully. Visible entanglements were against the mate's better judgment. He loved his little savage—what could he do? Just one.

The mate paused to roll a cigarette, chuckling as he did so. "She knifed me one day." I had frequently noticed a thin scar on his weather-browned neck. "It was one morning early, and I was coming back to our island in a canoe. You see, she was going to have a baby, and I had got restless and had strayed from the fold. She met me on the beach as usual, with 'Good morning!' Then quick as a flash she sprang at me,

and sent the knife into my neck. Fortunately it hit the collar-bone, and didn't do much damage."

"What did you do?" I asked.

"Oh, I wrenched the knife out of her hand and flung it away. Then she began sobbing, and I held her in my arms until she stopped. After that everything was all right again."

"And the baby, mate, what about *it*?"

"Well, the time for the baby to arrive came pretty close. Returning one afternoon to the house, I saw my girl bathing outside, as her habit was; and I saw that she had had her baby. Yes, while I had been gone during the day she had had the kiddie and was up and around again as if nothing had happened. But it was a girl, and she had wanted a boy. She felt pretty bad."



He went on to explain the occasion of his wandering from the family circle above mentioned. In the Gilberts when a wife finds herself pregnant all intimacy between her husband and herself ceases until the baby is weaned—a period of about eighteen months. In this interim the husband is offered any available female of the family to replace his wife, if he desires, whenever he feels inclined. But heaven help him if he goes outside of the family. The mate chuckled: "I didn't fancy Tam-ma's aunts."

When the baby was about nine months old, Tam-ma begged for another; more than anything in the world she wanted a son. At the first the mate was adamant; not a chance. But she was tearful, and soft, and pleading, and he finally said: "All right. One more. But this is the end—finish!" And sure enough the next one was a boy.

"What are your children's names, mate?" I asked.

"Mary and Tomasi."

"Do you love them—your children?"

"I can't say I feel a paternal love for them; the little boy I never really knew. I loved their little mother; a white man feels a certain tenderness for a half-savage girl who is his, body and soul, which is a thing entirely apart from the love he might feel for a white woman."

"And what of Tam-ma now?"

"Shortly after the little boy was born I was offered command of another windjammer. I took it. I was to be gone two years. I went to my little girl and explained. 'Now, before I go, wouldn't you like me to marry you?' She was pretty much broken up about my leaving, but she surprised me by her common sense. She said: 'No. If you love me you will come back. If you don't, being married to you will do no good.'"

"Did you go back?"

"Yes, I did. It was nearly two years later. But I never really saw her again. One evening, just at sunset, I brought my ship into the lagoon. As I entered the harbor I saw an outrigger glide across the water, and in it was Tam-ma and a native boy. I found she had married, and he having discovered that my ship was coming into harbor, had taken her away to another island. I felt that she was happy, I didn't interfere. I saw the two kiddies, though. They were pretty youngsters. But they didn't know who I was. A day or two after that I left the Gilberts, and I've never been back since."

"But, mate, don't you feel any responsibility for your children?" I persisted. "Would you like to educate them?"

"I have provided for them. Before I left her to go to sea I bought her some land with yielding cocoanut trees on it,

which would bring her shillings enough if she wants to pick up the nuts. But I wouldn't think of taking the children away from the islands; they would only go native again and be miserable. No, leave half-caste children in the islands. They will grow up and marry other half-castes, and probably be happy. Certainly they have a better chance of it there than among whites."

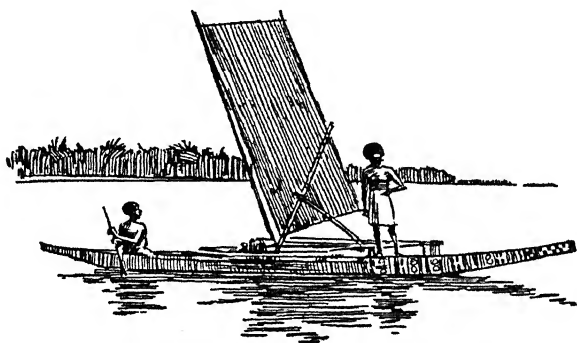
"I have other children in Tonga," the mate continued. "Letia (Let-eea) was *her* name. Lord, she was a great one. Over six feet and very dark-skinned. Letia was no person to trifle with. I remember one night I had a friend come aboard my ship. She was down in my cabin. Suddenly I heard that Letia was out on deck, and I went up to see her. It was a hot night, and I had on pajamas. Letia wanted to come down, but I told her I wasn't feeling well—had a touch of fever. She said she'd come down and rub my head. I told her I felt like being alone. Finally she said I had a woman in my cabin, and tried to force her way down. Things were looking bad—I bolted. In my pajamas I was, but I left the ship and beat it to a pub. Oh Lord, you should have seen the wreckage in my cabin when I returned."

There was neither apology nor braggadocio in the mate's chronicling of himself; he was the usual not-very-strong white man in the South Seas. But there was nothing of the despoiler about him. Underneath all the muck of years in the South Pacific something fundamentally fine showed through, and could be depended upon.

I asked the mate whether he would ever like to go back to Scotland, back to his own people. He said: "There have been times when I wanted to go back, but I never will now. Nobody cares anything about me back there—except the old lady."

"The old lady?"

"My mother. I used to write to her once in a while, but I haven't now for five years or more. She owns some ships, coaling ships. When my father died, she wrote and asked me to come home and take charge of them. But I knew if I did my relatives would say I had come back to get what I could out of her. It would have looked that way, too. So I told her I wanted to stay out here. I made up my mind that I would never go back until I was a success. But I'd like to see the old lady before she dies."





XXIII

QUEER CARGO

WE were now in the midst of island groups two degrees below the equator, headed up the coast of New Guinea for the wild Aitape district; more exactly, for the islands of Tomleo and Seleu, where the great Melanesia Company has a concentrating station for copra. We were now to lift a copra cargo in real earnest, to take back to Madang, whence the island steamer would carry it on to Rabaul.

I had enjoyed the early freedom and comparative comfort of the schooner, but when we began loading copra and passengers, including kanakas, I found I had not sufficiently appreciated it.

We were scheduled to stop at Walis Island, about half-way between Boiken and Aitape, to pick up a planter and his wife and children, their household goods and native labor, to take them back to Madang and on to a new plantation in the Admiralty. I looked forward to the company of another

woman with mixed emotions; life had been so pleasant alone on the *Nuloa*. But on the whole I welcomed it.

At Walis they had not expected us for another two days, and were not ready to depart. Would we please wait, at anchor, until they could complete their departing arrangements? The skipper cursed a bit when he got the message although we could have lain outside the reef a week for all the difference it would have made. So it was decided that we should proceed up to Seleo, and stop at Walis Island in a couple of days on our return trip.

It was at this time that the sow traded to us by Father Kirschbaum developed wanderlust and became a nuisance. The day we left Walis was meant for nothing but siesta. The sun beat mercilessly down; the humidity was terrific, the air breathless. I was in my bunk, the only place to escape the equatorial sun, drowsing off. Suddenly, from the skipper's cabin adjacent to the forward deck, came explosions of nautical Australian—the most utter in profanity—and the grunts and scuffling of the sow. With feminine and (perhaps) pardonable curiosity, she had negotiated the door combing and had wandered over the sill of the skipper's curtained doorway, arousing him from his siesta. He was mad, and the sow in her alarm could not make the grade of his high brass door-sill, over which she had a few moments before climbed so happily. The mate ran to the rescue—whether of the skipper or the sow I wasn't quite sure—and the poor beast was returned in ignominious defeat to her former habitat.

But she was now a troublesome pig, and this was not her last offense, although she fought shy of the skipper's cabin thereafter. More than once amid the shrieks of delighted boys, beating of sticks, and cursing of the mate, the wretched,

wandering animal was extricated from beneath the mess-table. She never visited me.

We were anchored outside the reef surrounding Tomleo, which is a mission station. From the deck I watched a blue-robed nun working in a little inclosed cemetery under the fierce sun. I whiled away some time conjecturing what could make a woman come out to this dot of coral to spend the rest of her life. A broken or disappointed life? Apathy? A fierce yearning for beauty that only the tropics satisfy? The unadmitted hope of romance? Or self-effacing piety and humanitarianism, the desire to labor thanklessly among a benighted race?

Down at the rough wharf a priest checked up the cargo, which was largely cases of excellent German wine. Little naked pickaninnies were alternately diving into the green water within the reef, and dancing about the white beach, like brown monkeys on a string. Joyous water babies!

It looked to be a pleasant place, Tomleo. But so lonely! So terribly serene! In the nun's swathed and bent figure I seemed to see the symbol of the loneliness of these islands on the verge of the world, where beauty can cut like a knife. But perhaps I was wrong.

So much do I love wandering,
So much I love the sea and sky,
That it will be a piteous thing
In one small grave to lie.

And now we turned back, bound for Madang once more. We passed close to Angel Island, a bouquet of palm fronds set in water that had deepened into madder. Natives watched us curiously as we passed; few ships go near Angel Island.

Walis is lovely to approach. A coral reef makes a green bracelet around it and the island of Tarawai next to it, and between them lie other reefs over which the blue water breaks in glorious, care-free white spray. It's very beautiful, this impetuous, free rush of breakers on a reef. Our German chart (quarter of a century old) showed no channel through the reef, no anchorage within the lagoon, but both were marked by buoys, and we were able to anchor close to the bridge. The engineer and skipper and I negotiated the remaining distance in the pinnace.

The Walis and Tarawai natives are an independent lot of savages; they are "free kanakas," under government control but living pretty much according to their own code. They are too proud to be recruited for labor except on the plantations of their two islands. As we stepped ashore, I noticed that here were more lapoons—old kanakas—than I had seen at one time in all New Guinea. They were revolting old men, filthy, drooling, and quite naked save for the briefest of fiber-cloth loin-girts. They squatted unconcernedly, chewing betel-nut, as we stepped off the pinnace on to the beach.

We had stopped here to pick up the Dennises, bag and baggage, including barnyard fowls, for transport to a new and unknown plantation. Before Mrs. Dennis's time no white woman had ever lived at Walis; it had never been meant that a white woman should live there. At her husband's request I wandered up to the plantation house. It was on top of a little rise. The island was a forest of cocoanut palms. In the short walk to the dwelling I passed native boys, in faded laplaps, bearing pieces of furniture or boxes of stores.

In a God-forsaken hovel of a plantation house I found a

white woman and two little children, one a boy of four, the other a baby in arms. The woman was young, not over thirty, but the tropics and the conditions under which she had lived had taken terrible toll both of youth and good looks. Her lackluster bobbed hair was pushed dejectedly behind her ears; her skin was yellowed and unhealthy, and fine lines crossed her forehead; her eyes showed pain, unhappiness, and disillusionment—also a fine courage. The chubby infant slept, despite the flies, in a pram just outside the veranda. Mrs. Dennis excused herself to see about having some tea served us. While she was away I said to myself: "Oh, no! a woman couldn't live here! If she did, *that* is what happens to her."

One side of the three-room house was caving in. Birds had built nests, unmolested, on the veranda wall, and were flying back and forth undisturbed by human beings. Ropes of bananas hung here and there to ripen; a mangy pup tried to make friends with me.

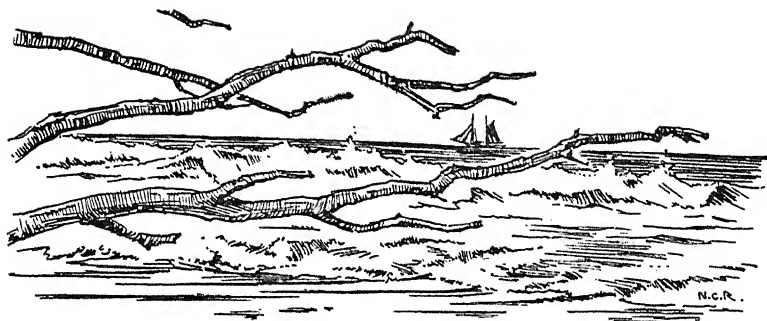
We had tea; mine was served in a whole cup. A maryl (with the rickets) picked up the sleeping cherub, and through a rubber nipple fed him lukewarm sweetened condensed milk and water. Then she put him back again in his pram, and a large fly fastened itself on his sticky-sweet mouth. Oh, the saints preserve us! I thought of our babies at home, sterilized and scheduled to within an inch of their precious young lives. But this Terry was a bonnie little one.

The natives, sensing that their white neighbors and masters were about to leave them, hovered about, some of them dejectedly, because a kanaka takes a parting very hard, at the moment. And they were very fond of the two children. One old native—he was longlong (daft)—hovered close to the baby's carriage and would not be sent away. He wanted just

to be able to caress the carriage, and he had a handful of bright shells for Terry.

We were headed back to Madang with our copra and our human cargo. Besides the immediate Dennis family, the *Nuloa* carried their household furniture, fifty natives to labor on the new plantation, a flock of geese, and a half-dozen goats to supply fresh milk for the baby at least some of the time. Two mornings out from Walis, I looked down from the navigating deck, and saw two bleating wobbly-legged little strangers. Yannis, the bo's'n explained: "Two fella mee-maa catch 'im pickaninny belong 'im along night-time." By the time we finally reached the Admiraltys and said farewell to our menagerie, we had added two more pickaninny-belong-mee-maa. On the return trip we picked up a number of passengers, bound either down south on furlough, or to new plantations, or to Rabaul via the island steamer that was soon due at Madang. By the time we reached Potsdamhafen the passengers were nine (enough to split the seams of the *Nuloa*) and there were a hundred and fifty raw bush-natives huddled on the foredeck. One night the mate called me to look down from the topdeck; I saw in the light of a quarter-moon and a hurricane lamp what looked like a Doré horror out of an old hell-book—kanakas sleeping on the deck with legs and arms so closely intertwined as to be an indistinguishable mass of brown humanity.





XXIV

WILDEST TRIP YET

WE were nearing Madang once more. I was sorry. I had been on the *Nuloa* for about four weeks. We had achieved the Sepik River, I had seen much that was wonderful, and I had been very happy and hated the thought of letting her go out again leaving me behind. For, after discharging her cargo at Madang, Captain Alys would be taking the schooner once more back toward the equator.

Day after to-morrow we should be in Madang once more. It was along in the afternoon, a terribly hot afternoon, when all our passengers were turned in for siesta. I had dragged a wicker chaise longue (belonging to the Dennises) to a corner of the poopdeck where there would have been a breeze if there had been any. Pretty soon the mate picked his way past the kanaka helmsman, stepped over a basket of fruit, ducked a couple of bunches of bananas swinging from the awning prop, and sat down on an upturned wooden box near me. He rolled us each a cigarette.

He came to the point: "You know, Miss America, it's a pity you don't go on this next trip with us. It will be good."

"Where you going, mate?"

"Back to Manus, then through the Admiraltys, and on out to the Purdys and Hermits, Ninnigo, Pelleluhun, Maty, Aua, Witu. We might even go as far as the Anchorites."

"How long will you be gone?"

"Ought to do it and back in six weeks. We'll probably go on to Rabaul next trip."

"But are you sure you want me along, mate?"

"Well," said he, "the Old Man and Jake and I were talking about it last night, and we all agreed you weren't much trouble aboard a ship. If you'd like to come, Miss America, we'd like to have you. This next trip is going to be an interesting one—none of us has made it before."

These three shellbacks were willing to carry me along with them on another uncertain adventure. It was a compliment, and I appreciated it.

So that was settled. Pigs, roaches, tinned food, leaky raincoat, the major inconveniences of life aboard a schooner, none of these things mattered; I loved it, and was happy. Fever had touched me but lightly in the islands. I was warned against the monsoons, which we could not hope to evade this time. Maskee! I wanted a monsoon.

With the skipper and the mate I pored over the charts, tracing our next course. On it "probable" soundings were given, though the chart was much of it blank or cautiously qualified with "reef supposed to be here," "probable anchorage," and the like. Over much of the sea-track we should have to sail by our own soundings. They were treacherous waters. No charting can be permanent, for submarine upheavals that are never heard of outside of the vicinity send toward the surface new atolls and reefs or submerge old ones.

§

It was November when the *Nuloa* put forth once more against the Admiraltys. This time she was crowded with passengers, including four women, the little Dennis boy, and two babes in arms, one of them young Terry, who was the best baby I have ever seen. A day out of Madang, we encountered the first stormy heralding of the monsoon season. But the squall didn't last long, and by midnight the waxing moon shone bravely behind ragged clouds.

And now we set out for the Purdys, tiny, unimportant little coral islands, too unimportant even to be given a place on most maps of the South Pacific, and hardly ever touched upon by even free-lancing schooners. The chart seemed to acknowledge them but grudgingly, and recorded briefly: "Very many reefs here."

Our passengers were soon dropped along the coast, except the Dennises and Lowforth.

We had picked up Lowforth as a passenger at Madang, within the last half-hour before sailing time. He had come down to the schooner, trailed by a police-boy carrying his worn leather grip. He had inquired of the skipper if he could get a passage. Where to? He didn't know—or care. Any place. The skipper said there wasn't a berth. Maskee! He'd be glad to bunk on a hatch. So he joined us.

And so, as was quite in line with tradition, the ship gained its "queer chap." I had met Lowforth once before, in Rabaul, to which every one in Melanesia drifts at one time or another. He was then with a vacationing gold miner. But I had merely met him; in fact, I had clean forgot him until he recalled the meeting to me. And he *was* a queer chap. He was a tall, dark

New Zealander, shabby, particularly frayed as to collar and cuffs. I don't believe he owned a coat. His black hair was graying at the temples. He was pleasant, he was likable, and definitely well-bred; and you knew the minute you laid eyes on him that he was a good-hearted weakling. I judged him to be about thirty-eight. He was forty-six.

I think I have never seen such a hopeless, aimless drifter as Lowforth. The turning over to a new owner of an Expro plantation had thrown him out of a manager's job weeks before. So naturally he had wandered down to Rabaul to see if anything offered itself. It did. The police master at Madang had resigned to join the gold rush. And Lowforth, being at loose ends at the moment, had gone into the little station on the New Guinea coast as police master.

But he and the D. O. didn't hit it up very well together. And now, all in a minute, he had resigned, because he had refused to hang a native. The kanaka deserved to be hanged, being a murderer, and, heaven knows, Lowforth needed his job as police master. But when he had taken the job in the first place he hadn't been clear as to his duties; certainly he hadn't known that he was expected to be Lord High Executioner. The hanging was scheduled for the day of the *Nuloa's* departure. The D. O. insisted that Lowforth do his duty. Within thirty minutes Lowforth was on the *Nuloa*, bound anywhere.

He had no prospects and little money, but he knew he would get out of his predicament somehow. He had no doubt been a handsome and promising boy. Like all New Zealanders, he was more British than a Briton.

I liked talking to Lowforth. He was entertaining and pleasant, making an art of indolence, perhaps a little too ready to please. He was a university man who when the war

broke out was completing his third year of medicine. He never finished his course, possibly because he sensed failure, and after the war he drifted out to Melanesia, picking up odd jobs as plantation manager, turning liklik doctor in native hospitals, acquiring little but experience, always on the move. Now, at forty-six, he was again adrift.

But everybody liked Lowforth.

§

The Purdys are easy to miss. They are a low-lying string of coral islands, six of them including two that are just tiny coral rocks plumed with a few cocoanut palms. The four main islands rejoice in the names of Rat, Bat, Mouse, and Mole. Unimportant as they are, as islands go, and hazardous as the chances were in the reef-fanged waters, we had orders to lift copra there. So find them the skipper did; incidentally, one lone island shown on the chart in the vicinity no longer existed. As we approached Bat Island one morning, it seemed entirely uninhabited. The glasses showed, however, one grass-roofed shack and a thin line of smoke. There being no anchorage, we tacked while the mate took off across the reef in a dinghy with a crew. He returned in half an hour, empty-handed, with the information that all the natives had hidden themselves. He had talked at them, sweetly and then sternly, but not a savage had so much as stuck his head around a cocoanut tree.

Eleven miles on toward the horizon lay the largest island of the group. This time the skipper, donning his epauleted white coat and helmet, set out in the dinghy. About this atoll a wide reef made an angry surf, and we watched the progress of the small boat with a thrill. Up it went on the back of a comber, then down over its crest and lost to our sight for a

moment in spume of surf. He was gone longer than the mate had been, but he came back with more to tell. Here, too, the kanakas had taken to hiding, all except the boss-boy, who came forth to greet his visitor. He volunteered the news that the little schooner *Ida* had passed that way a week before to collect copra, but the sea had been too rough to load and the *Ida* had at length turned back defeated. No other craft had been that way in many months.

So while the *Nuloa* tacked slowly within safe distance of the Nile-green reef, perilously fifty bags of copra were launched into deep water and hauled up from the dinghy upon the poopdeck. The skipper returned again with the last load, bringing a prize—a huge green turtle. On the beach three of them were turned up on their backs. The island boys asked in payment a few sticks of tobacco, some matches, and a little kerosene to fill their lamp-walkabout (hurricane lamp). Their supplies had long since been exhausted.

Tinned food was becoming a trifle unappetizing, and the engineer asked how we should like pigeon pie for dinner. We told him. Mouse Island looked verdant and promising for plover and parrots. Also, there might be more copra to lift. This time I went ashore with the engineer, the skipper, and a shoot-boy, to hunt game. It was a little island, and the plantation natives evidently had none of the fear of us that those of the other two had shown.

And here our shoot-boy, John, from Buka, met a "one-talk." The island boss-boy was a well-set, ebony-black native, and one could tell at a glance that he was from the Solomons or from Buka. Conference with the white masters over, the two Buka "one-talks" greeted each other with a European handshake and a string of unintelligible lingo. That they were glad to find each other there could be no doubt. The

meeting ended by the Mouse Island boy bestowing upon our John two shillings and his elaborately carved, long-toothed comb, whereupon our John, I am proud to relate, handsomely re-bestowed upon him one of the shillings and his beaded armlet.

There were apparently no women on any of the Purdy Islands. Here on Mouse Island was a circle of saccsac houses on stilts, approached from the beach by a path bordered with red-leaved crotons; the center plaza looked as if it had recently been swept. The boys were clean, self-respecting, and friendly.

John, the engineer, and I wandered through the island; we could have circled it in half an hour; our eyes were peeled for plover or parrots. I was a total loss as a huntsman, for the island with its tall thin kanaka palms, its mangrove swamps, and its beach strewn with marvelous shells, fascinated me into entire indifference to plover. Birds were not plentiful, but Jake and the shoot-boy brought down enough little green and red parrots for a "pigeon" pie. And you who doubt that parrots be delectable fare, after weeks of tinned tongue and bully-beef, should have your appetite piqued by parrot pie! Not quite so tender, perhaps, as squab, nor so delicate as broilers—but comparisons are odious when one lives and fares on a South Pacific schooner gathering pearl-shell and copra among unknown islands of Melanesia.

And such islands! Here the sea shelves abruptly from cream and Nile reef to great and transparent depth, where it is impossible to make soundings. The islands are trades-swept oases in the wide expanse of the Pacific. Happy the people who dwell here—and know no other life. For fresh water they have but to dig in the sand. Cocoanuts, birds, turtle, and fish are to be had with as little effort.

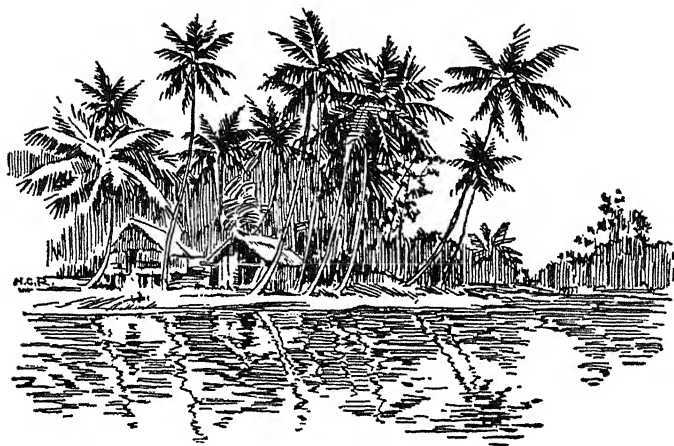
For a couple of days after we had left Dugamore Plantation Mrs. Dennis was ill, and I was concerned for her. She insisted that it was only malaria and that she was used to it. But she looked very bad. When she finally appeared on deck again, she lay white and wan in her wicker chaise longue, seeming more like a candidate for a hospital than for pioneering in the Admiraltys. Lowforth proved a great comfort, more by his sympathy and company than by any tangible assistance. There is little to do for fever save to administer quinine and aspirin at set intervals. But sympathy is sweet, and there is not too much of it when one is a fever victim in the islands. Every one presumably gets malaria there; it is not unusual enough to excite compassion.

When Mrs. Dennis was feeling better she made an effort to be pleasant, and I liked talking with her. Usually Lowforth was a third. She was thin but her figure was girlish, and after fever had passed her eyes were often without their dull expression of defeat.

The description of the new plantation, as given in the Tender Book, which she showed me, certainly sounded attractive. It spoke of a large plantation, yielding a satisfactory amount of copra, with numerous outhouses, a plantation house furnished, fresh water (artesian wells), and a sizable number of native laborers. We conjured up the vision of a white beach running back to a lawn, which perhaps would need careful attention to make it green. The bungalow would doubtless look out across the water. It had been a German plantation, and probably much of the original furniture would be there; a bit worn perhaps, but very comfortable. Originally it had been one of the flourishing plantations of the territory. By contrast with Walis it would, in any case, seem very splendid.

Mrs. Dennis had been gently bred. She was too good material to be wasted on a God-forsaken outpost of Melanesia. I don't know what her plans were for her two little sons. Except by schooner or canoe there would be no contact for them with other white settlers. In case of serious sickness it would be a race with death to the nearest medical center, which at present is Madang. But one doesn't dwell on such things in Melanesia.

Anyway, with the help of the Tender Book, we built up a pleasant picture of the new plantation—and in our hearts hoped that it would come true. Lowforth listened to us, and played with the baby. The skipper took a great fancy to the older boy, and the youngster shadowed his heels all day long.



XXV

MOVING BY SCHOONER

WE moved slowly through the verdant Admiraltys, flanked by an impossibly blue sea and sky. We sailed on serenely, without benefit of the engine; there was little breeze and less hurry. Most of these islands were untouched by the white man. Some were circled, in the bosky shadows behind white beaches, with villages of round grass huts. In the Admiraltys most of the natives are "free kanakas," unrecruited, living as they have lived since time began, fishing, hunting, raising taro, gathering saccas, observing their fantastic singings, engaging in occasional warfare. Frequently we caught sight of one of the beautiful Manus sailing canoes, with a square sail of beaten bark fiber and a wild-haired savage standing straight and stiff beside the mast narrowly watching our strange craft approach.

Now the time had come to enjoy the green turtle, which had roamed about the foredeck since we acquired it. That morning the mate had rigged up a sort of tent for me on the

topdeck, so that I could write or read in quiet and without sunstroke. Well on in the morning there rose a delighted commotion on the foredeck below me. Leaving my shelter, I leaned over the bridge to see what it was all about. I could not turn my eyes away. The cook had slaughtered the huge turtle, and was separating the flesh from the breast-plate. The deck ran with blood, and how anything that lives in the sea could have so much blood I don't know. A sickish, cloying odor hung on the air. Once the breast-shell had been severed, the turtle rested on its back, and inside of it swam dozens of eggs, some of them almost as large as tennis balls. The kanakas around shouted with glee. The Chinese cook-boy began cutting up the turtle's flesh with a prodigious, sharp knife, and in five minutes the forearms of the natives were bloody to the elbows, for they were plunging after the meat that the cook discarded.

That night there was home-made green turtle soup, gallons of it, delicious and delicate; and there was green turtle steak, coarse and excellent; and pudding made of turtle eggs, coarse like cornmeal and not at all appetizing.

Did I eat it, with the grim memory of a deck running with blood still fresh in my mind?

I did. I may have blunted sensibilities, but we didn't get a chance at green turtle soup every day.

§

It was a glassy and breathless Sunday. All morning long, when she thought herself unobserved, Mrs. Dennis's eyes had been straining into the horizon; we were due at the new plantation that day. I could see she was trying to banish misgivings.

Lowforth, leaning on the deck-rail beside me, told me that

the Dennises had invited him to stay with them for a while at the plantation, and that he was going to do so. It was a good arrangement. He could be both company for them and a help. And he would be near enough to Lorengau to hear of any jobs that might be offering.

In the middle of the afternoon we came in sight of the plantation. The reef extended far out into the sea, and we had to anchor a good distance off. Dennis stayed on board to superintend the unloading of their things and provisions. Lowforth and I, together with the two youngsters and some wicker furniture, went over first in the pinnace from the schooner. As we approached the shore two shark fins appeared within the reef. That settled the matter of sea-bathing.

Before us spread the plantation. We climbed out of the pinnace to the beach. It was a place to make one's heart stand still, if one must stay there! For Mrs. Dennis it meant ten years, if they fulfilled their contract. Huge trunks of long-dead quela trees lay at intervals through what we could see of the plantation. There were two even on the beach, whitened by the sun and giving an air of decay and desolation to the whole landscape. There was no lawn, just sand, about the house, though a few brave spears of grass pushed up their heads. The bungalow was a weather-beaten shell, built on six-foot piles, and consisting of three rooms, with a wide veranda running around it. There was a dismal house-cook to the rear, and a house-washwash near by. On the back veranda hung a rusted and cracked ship's bell, salvage from some ancient German wreck. This was to summon the labor.

The Tender Book had insinuated that the house was adequately furnished. The furniture was a bare table and four derelict chairs (one tied together with string) and a rickety

open cupboard in the center of the room. On the porch was a wooden bedstead with a piece of canvas nailed to it for springs and mattress. Also on the porch was one of those inventions of the devil—a German “easy chair.” It is a contraption that welcomes you into its mechanical mysteries, but refuses to relinquish you without great straining and effort and back-slipping. It was without canvas, merely the yawning framework.

The second room, presumably a bedroom, was empty. The third room was locked. Doubtless it contained the record books and accounts of the last manager. That remained to be seen.

The afternoon sun beat mercilessly on the corrugated, unlined iron roof. But the place was clean.

As we stood looking about us, Mrs. Dennis said, half under her breath, “Oh, no!” Her eyes had tears in them. Then she pulled herself together and silently, with lips tightly closed, continued her tour of inspection.

The plantation itself was largely swamp, and was in consequence a network of draining ditches, breeding places for mosquitoes. The palm fronds bore telltale, but not hopeless, yellow fronds. And we quietly learned the cause. Holes in the tree-trunks told of rhinoceros beetles. Suddenly, with difficulty, I suppressed a shriek. On the cotton netting at a window rested a grasshopper ten inches long. Grasshoppers! Dread enemy of the copra planter.

Some kanaka laborers straggled up to the steps and looked in curiously at the newcomers. Obviously they were lazy and altogether out of hand. And no wonder, for we learned that the previous manager had abandoned the place “be’ind two fella moon”—two months back. The natives were covered with the infectious kuskus.

Mrs. Dennis was a brick, but I could see her fighting for self-command. All she said was, "Oh, I'm so disappointed! Just look at the house!" The years of this to face!

Warned by the poverty of the house furnishings, we were somewhat braced for what we might find in the house-cook. The Tender Book had reported, confidently, that the kitchen was equipped for housekeeping, and that there was also crockery. In the house-cook was a broken stove, a tea-kettle, and three saucepans. The crockery (quarter-inch thick) consisted of six soup plates, a platter, and one cracked cup. And to complete the outfit there was a brown earthenware tea-pot with a broken spout, the lid tied to the handle with a hemp string.

Our tour of household inspection was over. We had seen all there was to see. Fortunately there was little time for reflection; household effects began arriving from the schooner thick and fast. Lowforth was, for the moment, a wonder. I was glad he was there, glad he was going to stay on. If ever a woman needed some one to lean on, some one to lend sympathetic comfort, it was that Mrs. Dennis. And Lowforth was enjoying the almost forgotten sensation of being needed, being wanted, being busily necessary to a situation. From some place he resurrected an axe and screw-driver, and began opening wooden packing boxes.

We all pitched in to help. The first thing we erected was the baby's iron crib on the side veranda. The three of us were more in than out of great boxes, handing to waiting, wide-eyed kanakas packages of tinned foods, groceries, crockery, what not; we fished out tea, sugar, and tins of biscuits, and cups. Then Mrs. Dennis, with a fine attempt at care-free cheerfulness, announced: "Let's have tea!" I firmly believe that a Britisher, running from the Devil, at 4:30 P. M. would

call a halt and say: "Let's have tea!" As we drank it in the wretchedly cheerless dining-room with a western sun pouring through unshaded windows, we three played a make-believe game as to what could be done with cretonne and the wicker furniture she had brought with her. We were almost happy when finally along came the skipper, the engineer, and Dennis with the last load for the plantation.

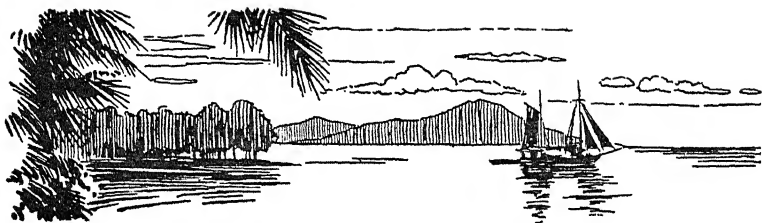
All of us took a walk out into the plantation, slapping at mosquitoes. Things promised not to be too dreadful, if they were taken in hand at once. The palms were laden with cocoanuts clustering about their heads, despite the giant grasshoppers and rhinoceros beetles, which would have to be fought tooth and nail. The plantation natives, lazing around their huts, might be brought to work by an iron hand. One of the wells was boarded up—probably pestilential—but another still gave water, deadly dangerous water. Back from the house, beyond the arid exposure of sand, we came upon a clearing showing traces of a grass tennis court. There was the ghost of a garden here, something that, despite the tropical setting, looked like England. But instead of roses and hedgerow there were gorgeous hibiscus, sweet pale frangipani, rioting bougainvillea, and splendid crotons. The spot had possibilities—if one had a mind to work for them.

The skipper wanted to get on his way, so we wandered back to the beach. We saw something that suddenly made the place indelibly beautiful in my memory. Down on the beach, in high relief, stood a lone, feathery casuarina tree—a delicate tracery against the orange sky.

Again I said good-by—so much of life is spent in farewells—and I climbed with the skipper and engineer into the pinnace. Beyond the reef our schooner waited for us, her sails furled, her brown crew lazily dangling fishing lines over

her sides. The remote loneliness of this plantation had cut so deep into my sensibilities that the uncomfortable, roach-ridden little ship looked homelike and very desirable to me. I could hardly have borne to have left a white woman—a friend—there in that God-forgot out-station alone with an uncongenial husband and two little children if Lowforth had not remained behind. I felt somehow that he would soften the beginning of her days there, until she got used to things. Probably he couldn't stay for very long; probably the situation, when they all got used to each other, would become strained, even impossible, and then Lowforth would once more set out to engage in his unequal struggle with the world. But the arrangement was much the best for the time being.





XXVI

HE LOVED BUT ONE

IN half an hour I was seated once more at mess with my three original shipmates. It was nice to be alone again, the four of us.

The anchor was up and the engine throbbing. Once more we were headed into strange waters, beneath which lay another world far too lovely for words. As evening dropped, above us was the dusty splendor of the Milky Way, the serene white beauty of the Southern Cross, the brilliant cluster of the Pleiades. And around us closed the moonlit wonder of a tropic night. Small wonder that we four were happy.

That night Captain Alys stood the eight-to-twelve watch; I kept him company. At eleven-thirty he went below and opened a tin of asparagus, and we had a midnight feast. But in the meantime we had reverted once more to the subject of his dead wife.

The skipper was forty-two. He came of good English stock; his male forebears had, many of them, been attached to the sea in some capacity, as sea captains, marine engineers, or navy men. His own father had been burned to death aboard a ship, trying to save another officer. So little Cyril

Alys was sent for schooling to a famous old school in London. He must have been a sturdy, pudgy, droll little tyke in the traditional school uniform—long black coat, blue knee-breeches, mustard-colored stockings, and square-toed buckled shoes. His mother dreaded the call of the sea for him; it was in his blood. She and his uncles opposed his desire to be apprenticed to the sea; they wanted him to be a solicitor. So one day he up and ran away from school, with not a farthing to his name, nor other clothes than the quaintly fantastic outfit that he stood up in.

He was fourteen, and he looked about ten. Luck was with him, for a sailing ship was just about to set out across the world and her cook needed a boy. The captain, said skipper Alys, took a shrewd look at the earnest face gazing half fearfully and half hopefully up at him, and apparently saw a vision of himself just before his first voyage before the mast. Also, perhaps, the master of the old wind-jammer knew well that if he didn't take over the lad, that lad would find, somehow, somewhere, other means to get to sea. And the cook needed a boy very badly.

The skipper could laugh now, thirty years later, in telling about it, but the experience must have been rather severe for the carefully reared youngster. First of all, his clothes were a great trial to him. He was the butt of the forecastle. But wear the mustard stockings, and buckled shoes, and the blue breeches he must or go naked. In the weeks that followed he learned the mysteries of plum-duff and other dishes pertinent to seamen's diet; and, what's more, he shed his adolescent sensitiveness and softness; he also learned to hate the cook, whose bullying made his life a torment. So, at the end of a long voyage, he promptly deserted. The pay for his

labors wasn't much, but he bought some new clothes and swaggered out into the world—a man at last.

It was nearly two years before he found his way back to England again. By that time his mother and uncles were reconciled to his belonging to the sea. But, as a compromise, they agreed that he should go about it regularly, and the next time he sailed it was as an apprentice. In the course of time he gained his master's certificate.

Years later he was in Suva, Fiji. There his strange romance began. He fell in love with a young nurse, an Australian girl. Captain Alys is a one-woman man. No other woman had ever made an impression on him. He married her in 1913. At that time he was master of a bark, with a route among the islands of Micronesia, his headquarters at Suva. These two devoted young people were popular among the happy-go-lucky social set of the colonial metropolis. One day Mrs. Alys was thrown by her horse, and was dragged for a distance on her head before the beast could be halted. A few weeks in the hospital, however, turned her out apparently as good as new.

Promptly upon England's entry into the war Captain Alys enlisted in naval service. She herself enlisted in the Red Cross. Despite the fact that she had a husband in active service, she succeeded in being sent abroad on duty. For more than two years the pair lost trace of each other; not even a relayed communication passed between them. Two years of intensely hazardous service were telling on Captain Alys's nerves; at the end of that time he was temporarily transferred to the command of a hospital ship bound for Sydney. Stopping at Singapore, the ship picked up a group of disabled and shell-shocked nurses.

The day after leaving Singapore the captain and his staff made their usual rounds of the ship, and in the line-up of nurses Captain Alys suddenly came to a halt. His wife stood in the middle of the line, looking at him with never a flicker of an eyelash. Remember: they hadn't seen each other in two years, and they had been perfect lovers. He stepped toward her eagerly, all war-time discipline for a second forgotten.

"Beth!" he said. She looked at him, answering nothing with eyes or tongue. He thought she was playing a soldier's part, that her silence was perhaps a rebuke to him for relaxing his official reserve. He passed on.

Later he called the matron to his cabin, and asked her to bring the girl to him. In a few minutes she stood before him; she looked well and was as beautiful as ever. She had followed the matron obediently like a little girl. He said, "Beth! Don't you know me? Why don't you speak to me!"

She looked at him as if she had never seen him before. He turned to the matron. "This is my wife!" The matron was skeptical; she had seen much in her time, and she wasn't gullible. So the distraught captain motioned to her to take the nurse away. Then, summoning the doctor in charge of the casualties aboard, he explained to him the incredible situation. The doctor, too, knew war-time humanity and had witnessed strange maneuvers to gain an end. "Well," he said, smiling, "you picked the prettiest girl in the lot."

"I tell you, she's my wife!" repeated Captain Alys. "She wears a wedding ring. Take it off and look at the inscription."

When the doctor had convinced himself, he said gravely: "I'm sorry for you, Captain Alys; her memory is gone, probably forever, and she has lost her power of speech."

The skipper went on with his story to me: "I was stunned for a minute. You see, there had been times when the un-

certainty of Beth's whereabouts had nearly driven me mad. Not a word of her since the time we said good-by in Suva. But I had been certain that somehow everything would be all right again, and that we should go back to the old happiness together. And now this had happened."

He had asked the doctor: "What are you planning to do with her?"

The reply was that she was to be placed in one of the great Sydney hospitals, along with the rest of the shell-shocked patients.

"Not on your life," announced the little captain. "I'm going to take her; I can at least make her life as comfortable and happy as possible."

Before the ship reached Sydney Captain Alys called the matron. "How would you like to be the head of a small private hospital?" he asked her. She said she would like it.

Back in Sydney, Captain Alys set up, with part of his tidy fortune, a small hospital. The matron was head-nurse, his wife the first patient. He spent his furlough by her side, trying to bring back to the clean slate of her memory some recognition of him and their happiness in Suva. She heard him, and looked at him with unpuzzled lack of comprehension, uttering no word, absolutely docile. Medical examination showed that it was doubtful, but not impossible, that something (perhaps a sudden shock or the abrupt coming upon something once very familiar) might restore her memory; and time and careful coaching might bring back her power of speech.

Captain Alys, when his furlough was up, went back to service. At the end of the war he returned swiftly to his wife, dedicating to her the rest of his life in memory of one year of unalloyed happiness. Now she was to him a helpless,

very dear child. With infinite patience he tried to teach her to speak, and she did learn to talk again in a barely inarticulate fashion; but *he* always knew what she meant.

Whether or not a gleam of light penetrated her memory as to him it was difficult to tell. Certainly she at length knew a fondness for him, but it may have been born of constant association with the man who treated her with surpassing tenderness. She kept her splendid beauty, kept it absolutely unmarred by the traces that knowledge and care bring to a face. Her wealth of waving dark hair retained its luster and loveliness. She was no longer his mate, but he loved her as Pygmalion must have loved Galatea.

Eventually Captain Alys took an apartment in Sydney for her, employing a housekeeper to look after Beth while he was busy during the day on a shore job with one of the shipping companies in Sydney. But that plan didn't work; the housekeeper didn't care as he thought she should for his wife. So he gave up all work and devoted himself entirely to his charge.

Finally a celebrated surgeon said it was possible that an operation on Mrs. Alys's brain might bring back her memory. It was a very delicate operation, and he himself would not do it. A brain specialist, examining her, said there was a slight chance that such an operation would be successful, but the risk was too great. It was not performed. The specialist recommended, however, a return to Fiji, among the old and poignant surroundings; coming face to face with these things might pierce the cloud. Captain Alys took Beth back to Suva.

She was not a helpless invalid; physically she was very well. She lived in the present, and enjoyed life very much in her own way, a childish way. She had always been a

splendid needlewoman, always much interested in pretty clothes. She still was both. He kept her supplied with beautiful silks and other materials imported from China, and day after day she sat with her head bent over her sewing, greeting him or allowing his nearness with soulless acquiescence or with petulance if something irritated her. He was only a shadow at the threshold of her consciousness.

"For nearly twelve years she was like that," went on Captain Alys. "I loved her. She had no husband and I had no wife. But she was content, and I was happy in serving her."

In Suva again, it was thought that the sea might do Mrs. Alys good, and the captain got command of the *Nuloa*, taking his wife aboard with him. For a year and a half they cruised a route among the Pacific islands. She, the Unfortunate One, had often sat where and as I sat, facing this same man, her hands folded in the lap of her pretty frock, unconscious of his yearning for her. And I knew that I owed my own great experience aboard this ship to the fact that at times my feminine presence conjured up the illusion of her.

Eighteen months they spent aboard the *Nuloa*. Then Captain Alys was transferred to one of the little cargo steamers out of Rabaul, and they moved to the Melanesian capital. He installed her in a "suite" in the European Hotel there. Some of the women in Rabaul took very kindly to the beautiful childlike woman; every one there knew—does know—her story. She seemed happy. Alys left and returned periodically, and kept her supplied with plenty of money, and lovely fabrics to fashion into far more frocks and pretty things than she could ever wear. He drank sometimes then, but never in her presence.

Presently he noticed that his eyesight was failing. An examination showed a cataract forming. So they returned once

more to Sydney. He went to a hospital for an operation. One morning a friend, always watchful of Mrs. Alys in a neighboring apartment, observed that she did not make her usual appearance. The friend entered the apartment and found her lying dead across her bed, with a smile on her lips. Death apparently had caught her up swiftly in gentle arms.

Captain Alys, lying with bandaged eyes, could not attend her funeral.

Later he returned to Rabaul, and resumed command of the little trading vessel, plying between there and the Solomons. But his anchor was gone, and, perhaps for oblivion, he began drinking hard. And when he was drunk he was an ornery, mannerless little brute. After a year of this every one lost patience with him except those who had a great sympathy for him because of his years of faithfulness to a childish wife.

Then the owners of the *Nuloa* brought it up from Suva to make our experimental trading cruise out to the atolls of the northern archipelago. Captain Alys was the logical skipper for her.

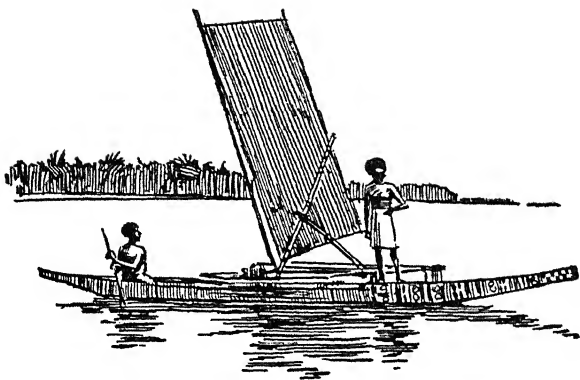
I've seen Captain Alys drunk, but never when he was navigating. Once, in fact, he nearly crowned me with a large metal flashlight that he carried, for no apparent reason. The mate's big form came between me and the skipper just in time. But when he sobered up, and after the mate had explained the enormity of his conduct toward the lady, I received a humble apology. For the first time the skipper called me by my Christian name. I told him to forget the unhappy incident, and congratulated him on not having a hospital case on his hands.

He said: "I don't know what makes me drink. When I

first married Beth I did, and she made me promise to give it up. Now that she's gone I can't give it up."

We never alluded to the flashlight incident again. Nor, fortunately, was it ever repeated.





XXVII

BEAD-MINDED PAK

INTERMITTENT rain, presaging the coming monsoons. Sudden squalls, starting as a small bank of gray smoke on the horizon where all else was laughing and blue, and coming on as a column of straight rain toward us. Pelting of heavy drops on the water's smooth surface five yards from the dry deck, then a deluge for a few minutes, freshening the air for a little while. And suddenly again, as we moved on, we were in the unconcerned sunlight where no rain had been. The tattered canvas serving as awning on the poopdeck was slackened and creased into a runnel so that the precious rain-water might run into the opened top of the galvanized water tank beneath it. There were four of these big tanks. Plenty of fresh water for all of us, if it rained. It is odd-tasting water, particularly when it gets low and reddish in color. When we were fortunate enough to have moulis (limes) after a stop at a plantation, I asked Elisa the steward to squeeze the juice of one into my water glass to kill the "schooner" taste. But we didn't often have moulis, and then I drank the

water as it was, praying that my typhoid inoculation would stand the strain.

All around us lay the thickly jungled islands of the Admiraltys. Far off against the sky rose the dark outline of Manus ("Manus-true," say the kanakas). The atolls basked lazily in the sun. Occasionally recruiters find their way out where we were then. Schooners in search of bêche-de-mer, radiant gold-lip, or trocus shell cast anchor for a night or so within a beautiful lazy lagoon. Once in a while a trader's ketch will stop to barter calico and trade tobacco for mother-of-pearl or sun-dried copra in the native villages that rim some of the islands.

Far off, along the coast of Manus-true, every six weeks the *Marsina* stops at Lorengau and then crosses the bay to Lumbrum and Mokareng to take on a load of copra and put off a handful of mail and periodicals. But the steamer only bides a few hours, and then, like a disdainful lady, picks her way fastidiously among the coral reefs out to sea, going on then first to Rabaul and finally back to the splendors of Sydney. In the monsoon season the steamer is likely to miss Manus altogether. The sea thereabouts is not healthy during the northwest monsoons.

Among these islands lies Pak. We were going there, for we carried some provisions and supplies for the young planter stationed on it. Otherwise there is no reason for any one's going to Pak. For me was the thrill of being the first white woman to visit the island. Not that this fact is of any import or significance to any one except my queer self; visiting Pak was no great feat once I got headed in that direction, but the fact of priority remained, and I thrilled to the spirit of the pioneer.

The approach to the island is very beautiful. The water

surrounding it on a sunny day shades from Nile-green, where the coral rises close to the surface, to the jade of deeper water, and then to turquoise, where the sea-floor drops many fathoms further down. But you can see the sun playing in distorted dapples on the white sand bottom far below.

It was the middle of the afternoon when we reached Pak. As we dropped anchor a little pinnace came through the reefs to the harbor, sailed by the owner of the plantation. He was a friendly, cheery chap, very happy in the solitude of his island paradise.

All about us swarmed outrigger canoes, filled with natives who looked unusually savage. Only in the Admiralty Islands do the natives of Melanesia wear beadwork; on Pak they were literally loaded down with it.

The natives there are splendid physically. The men in the welcoming outriggers were of a dark chocolate color, and their hair grew in a wild untrained bush, left in its natural fuzzy black state, uncolored, while stuck in each mop was a tall intricately carved and pigmented comb with teeth fully ten inches long. This evidently was to scratch with, for in that heathen mop of wool no comb could serve any other purpose.

Most of the savages wore bone rings in their noses. Their appearance of fierceness was enhanced by the bristling dog-tooth and porpoise-tooth necklaces. But the features of these brown men were more genial, and their manner less suspicious and guarded, than their cousins of Manus-true, whom I had met months before. Only two of the men wore calico laplaps; probably this sophisticated couple had at some period been indentured to an outside plantation. The rest wore simply the bark-cloth breech-clout of the islands. But they were all gorgeous with beads—broad armlets of beads above



their elbows, belts of them around their waists, and wide anklets like shin protectors.

The first native to climb aboard was a chief—a most splendiferous creature. He was girded in a large black-and-yellow checkered lap-lap, and wore a wide bead neckband about his throat. Slung over one shoulder was a beautifully woven basket trailing fiber fringes half-way to the ground; this to carry such treasures as trade tobacco, an old and empty cigarette tin, and his kombung gourd filled with powdered lime to chew with betel. He was a very self-important luluai.



More kanakas gained the deck, bearing baskets of oranges, bananas, papaws, and breadfruit for barter. They were consumed with curiosity. No such excitement as our coming had struck Pak since the new owner took over the plantation. Soon the mate roused them overboard into their outriggers, and the usual trio—skipper, engineer, and myself—climbed down the rope-ladder into the pinnacle and glided over the reef to make a call.

The beach swarmed with bush-kanakas when we landed. There were many women among them, some with heads close-shaven, some with short corkscrew curls, all laden down with bead chains and decorated with the same strange bead anklets that I had first noticed on the men. On Pak the marys wore a kind of pulpul different from any I had yet seen. The grass was much coarser than the finely shredded pandanus fronds of the New Guinea mainland marys; and the garment consisted merely of two narrow, bushy panels of grass hung front and rear, tied with a cord around the waist. These pulpuls were awkwardly long, almost to the ankles,

and they had none of the suave, insinuating grace of the silky skirts of Awar and Marienberg. Beads covered the distended ear-lobes; not a few marys wore beaded rings in their noses; bracelets covered half of their arms, and girdles encircled their waists. Each woman carried a huge fiber bag slung around her forehead and weighted down to her knees in back, loaded with either fruit or a baby.

The shaven heads belonged, noticeably, to the older women; the younger and perter women wore the tight curls. And the children were exceedingly comely. These have silky, curly (not frizzy) hair. The girl children, even little mites two years old, wore tiny duplicates of their mothers' bushy pulpuls; the boys were healthily naked except for a string of beads.

Tony, the young planter, was at the shore to greet us, pleased at this unexpected visit. He had been visiting for a couple of days at Mokareng, and it was only luck that had brought him back to his island in good time for us. The plantation house of three rooms and wide veranda was pleasant enough; like its master, it looked well-kept, clean, cheerful, and self-respecting. The natives had brought fruits for barter, and already there was a pile of bananas, papaws, and mangoes half a head high at the foot of the bungalow steps. Fresh fruit meant a lot to us after a diet of tinned apricots. The planter's boss-boy did the buying. I watched him with amusement. Glancing at the pile of fruit contemptuously, he offered a stick of tobacco here (grudgingly), and kicked aside there what he considered unfit. And he paid about a tenth of what we should have paid for enough to last us several days aboard the schooner.

The inhabitants of Pak are keenly curious. As we sat on the veranda, smoking and—yes—having a snifter now and then,

natives crowded about the steps to watch every move we made. A mavy, bolder than the rest, sidled up and held out her hand for a cigarette. I gave it to her. It was a mistake, for there was a rush of supplicating hands. Tony left us for a moment; his absence gave them courage to crowd closer. Like children waiting to be told they mustn't, they sidled up the steps, hugging the railing. The master returned and went into furious action.

Striding to the head of the steps, he shouted: "Raus, you bush-kanakas, you! Whât you think—house belong me all same house kongkong!" Doubtless it was the look in his eye that sent them scuttling into the bushes below and on to safety by the beach. From that new vantage point they trained on us their unsatisfied curious eyes.

Tony had a difficult situation on his hands; it was imperative that he keep his authority by maintaining a certain fear in the hearts of these natives. For the kanakas themselves owned part of the island, and their villages lay on the outskirts of his plantation. He had arranged with them to buy their copra and whatever produce they could supply that he needed. In turn, his trade-store furnished them, in barter, with the things that were dear to their hearts. There is a handsome profit to be made by South Sea traders supplying glass beads, tobacco, and the giddy and often surprising trifles that kanakas adore.

For instance, more than one trader in times past has cleaned up a tidy sum on old newspapers. A kanaka likes to smoke trade tobacco—the sticky, black braids of weed that all of us out there use for native trading where shillings are of no value. The natural and best way to smoke this is wrapped in a dried leaf. But when the white-fella-mastah smokes his tobacco neatly wrapped in paper, the kanaka

hankers to ape him. An old sheet of newspaper answers the purpose admirably. A kanaka, therefore, values a sheet of the Sydney "Sun" or the London "Times" more than he does a bright shilling representing many days of toil on a plantation. It is the old story again of supply and demand. The canny Admiralty trader buys his old newspapers by the pound and sells them for a shilling a sheet.

The skipper was in an excellent frame of mind, mellow enough to be good company. He had come ashore all decked out regardless: white uniform with gold and blue shoulder stripes, white oxfords, white helmet. He looked a very skipper, and we were proud of him. The natives gazed at his immaculate whiteness in awe and respect; nothing equalling him had ever struck Pak before. No mere plantation manager had ever made such an impression.

Tony, the progressive young man, had a motor lorry, and in it he drove us two miles along a rough bullock-path to the villages of Hahai and Mogera. We must of necessity climb down from the lorry when the road abruptly ended, and walk along a croton-bordered path, where gaudy hibiscus, heavy with rain, drenched sleeve or collar whenever they brushed against us.

Hahai was a fenced-in clearing. We climbed over a kind of stile that served as a gate to the village, and found ourselves on the outskirts of a large, clean common, around which clustered about thirty low circular grass huts. It was close to sunset time, and as might have happened in a New England hamlet at such an hour, the villagers were quietly sitting around their respective doorways. Unlike New Englanders, however, they squatted cross-legged on the ground, and most of them were engaged in chewing betel. Alternately they took a bite of the white-centered fruit and then took

a lick at lime-covered kombung stick; the combination making a brilliant red saliva, which eventually was spat in a crimson splotch on the ground. In New Guinea, the floor of a kanaka village and the paths of a white town look startlingly as if they had been the scenes of recent massacres.

We created something of a sensation as we approached, what with our resplendent skipper and the hitherto unknown vision of a white mary. I wore the remnants of my "tropical" raincoat—the fetching transparent affair of white oiled silk which I had bought in New York, beautiful but dumb. A curly-mopped "monkey" touched it gingerly and breathed reverently: "Goddam!" I had frequently felt like using the same word to it, but not the same tone.

Under a thatched shelter was a huge garamut, elaborately carved. Under another shelter one of the magnificent sailing canoes of Manus was in process of creation. The thirty-foot keel had been hollowed out of a single tree-trunk. Even in its uncompleted state it was a thing of beauty and admirable workmanship. The projecting bow and stern were richly ornamented with shells and mother-of-pearl, and further decorated with painstaking filigree carving, this in geometric design peculiar to the tribe, rather than the alligator and pig design so noticeable up the Sepik. The sails of these famous Manus canoes are woven of fiber and are as pliable as canvas.

Hahai is a self-respecting community. I entered a hut and looked about me. In the center of it I could stand upright, with full two feet to spare. It was hot and close, but entrances four foot high at the back and front gave some ventilation. The ridge pole running along the center of the roof was converted into a shelf, upon which reposed some pottery vessels and carved wooden bowls. And from the pole

hung woven bags and baskets filled with personal belongings or with breadfruit, taro, and papaws. Bundles of spears, painted red and with obsidian tips, lay along one side of the hut. A fishing net hung against another. Hard table-like contraptions on short legs served during the day as catch-alls and at night as beds. In one hut I was brought to sudden awareness of an outside world and of myself by coming face to face with a surprising countenance; it was only my reflection in a cheap, pine-framed mirror. I looked with disgust at the shoddy mirror, representing my race and civilization alongside the splendid carving and the superbly decorated ship which the untutored heathen had created with their hands.

Tony and the skipper were up at the other end of the village bartering with the natives for beadwork. I had wanted one of the rare ceremonial bead skirts, or pulpuls, from the Admiralty Islands. Now was my chance. A word to Tony, and he had a mary bring forth from the fastness of her hut a really beautiful apron, or skirt, woven in geometric panels of red, white, blue, and gray beads. It was fringed with shells, feathers, and bits of calico, and it tied about the hips with a woven-bark cord. Neither shillings nor tobacco interested the mary or her husband as payment for the pulpul; only beads in return would do, enough beads to make a new skirt. Tony said it would take about eight shillings' worth of trade beads, and that he had some in his store. So we closed the deal; the mary and her husband were to trudge over to the plantation in the morning, and Tony was to deliver to them the beads. Handing over to Tony eight bright shillings, I took possession of the pulpul.

I don't know when beads went into the Admiraltys. The Admiralty Islanders have decked themselves out in beadwork as far back as the present white settlers know. Doubt-

less the first eighteenth century discoverers introduced these simple people to the bright bits of glass. Why Pak alone should have gone bead-minded, I could not discover. While the rest of the Admiralty Islands make beautiful bead arm-lets and belts, only Pak goes in for beads in a really big way.

The skipper was trading away furiously. He had already bought two molting hens, price two marks each, and given instructions that they be delivered aboard the *Nuloa*. (Incidentally, one of them never arrived.) And now he was bargaining with a maryl for a very ragged pulpul. He was not very sober, and was in prime condition to make some move to antagonize the natives if they balked him in any way. We came upon him holding the moth-eaten garment up across his own rotund corporation to get the effect, his helmet jauntily on the back of his head.

Apparently he and the maryl couldn't agree as to the price. He was pointing out to the puzzled crowd of savages the skirt's shortcomings. At length he appeared to reach a compromise—five sticks of tobac. We jeered at him, saying it was a terrible pulpul, so with great dignity he pushed it back to the bewildered maryl. It was time to proceed to Mogera if we would reach there before night lowered. As I stepped over the stile an old lapoon came up with a feathered and carved singsing head-piece, and tendered it to Tony for missus-belong-'im. It is one of the finest things I have from Melanesia.

Mogera was a jungle idyl, bathed in rose light, beneath its spindly cocoanut palms. The luluai's maryl stood before her hut as we intruded upon the quiet village. Her arms, from wrists to shoulders, were covered with broad bead arm-lets. Her well-shaped head was shaved to the skull. The bushy grass panels of her pulpul did little to hide her lithe

figure. Bead shin-bands covered her legs to the knee. She looked like a bronze statue as she stood motionless and watched us enter among the cluster of thatch huts. I spoke to her: "Good day, mary." Without answering she turned and, stooping down, entered her hut. Each native wore a carved dog-tooth necklace.

Among the awed, staring children stood one little monkey colored black as coal from crown to toe. He was an orphan, and blackened with charred copra shell for his period of mourning. At a doorway sat a splendid and comely mary, laden down with ornaments. She was a weird sight, for exactly one half of her head and body was painted a cardinal red and the other half was blackened even as the little orphan. She was a widow. A group of marys squatted or stood around her.

I walked over alone to see them and to examine this strange creature more closely. My coming caused a sensation. They had never seen a white woman before, and were at a loss how to catalogue me. A hideous old lapoon mary approached and eyed me as curiously as I did her. She smiled a horrible gummy smile, sociably. I smiled back. "Good day, mary." Tentatively she put out her horny hand and stroked me, and then, evidently wondering at the comparative flatness and concealment of my figure, she felt where she assumed my breasts would be and inquired, "Suzu?" (Milk?). I replied heartily, "No got!" Whereat they all shrieked with laughter.

Then they began feeling me curiously. I was in a ridiculous, somewhat embarrassing situation. My inclination was to call "Hey, Tony!" for rescue. But they were friendly enough; they merely wanted to find out what sort of queer being I was. So, instead of calling for help, I pushed away

the dozen hands that were patting and squeezing me, pushed them gently but most firmly, and flourished my tin of cigarettes. Immediately their interest changed, and hands were outstretched, to my relief, for a different purpose. Their unintelligible tribal chatter rose shrill on the quiet evening. Jake, the engineer, strolled over, hands in his pockets, to see what the disturbance was about. He found me distributing Capstans, after which I parted from the women on very good terms. I didn't let him know how nearly I had reached a crisis at the hands of those inquiring jungle ladies.

The skipper was becoming impossible. He was talking heatedly and threateningly with two wiry, bush-haired natives whose expressions were unmistakably dark with mounting anger. Over his wrist hung a superb carved-tooth necklace. Such a thing is prized by jungle people beyond all comprehension. The skipper was determined to have it for three sticks of tobacco. To complicate matters, he had only one stick left, and was trying to impress upon the owner of the necklace that he would leave two sticks more at the plantation house with Tony. One could see at a glance that the kanakas were not taking kindly to him. Either they had been aboard the *Nuloa* or they knew by their uncanny method of relaying information that we had a pig on board. A kanaka would sell his soul and his wife for a pig. The owner of the necklace delivered the ultimatum: "Maskee tobac. Me like pig!" Much to our relief, the skipper thrust the necklace roughly back into the native's hand.

It was time for us to go, for it was fast getting dark. We passed through the village, followed by a crowd of naked savages. It was beautiful, Mogera at dusk. A maryl, straining her eyes to make a grass pulpul, glanced up with a greeting as we went by. A young man was weaving a pandanus mat

before his doorway. A boy, evidently having once been on a plantation, called out to me: "Good ap-ter-noon!" I called back: "Yacoq!" He grinned, and I called: "You no savvy Yacoq?"

"Yes, missus, me savvy Yacoq!"

Then over the stile, and through the banana orchard, and back we went to the waiting lorry, which in pidgin is "ship-kerosene-belong-bush."

Tony came over to the schooner for dinner. Suddenly, at midnight, without warning, it began to pour. So Tony spent the night with us. And we had a festive asparagus supper before we all turned in.



XXVIII

FISH THAT WERE FISH

ANCHORED in Seeadlerhafen, midway between Mokareng and Lorengau, on Manus, the largest island of the Admiraltys, we lingered for several days. The skipper wanted to get orders from headquarters in Rabaul as to whether we should return to Madang with what copra we had or concentrate our cargo here, to be picked up by the island steamer, and proceed north again toward the equator for more. Of the six or seven wireless stations throughout Melanesia, one is at Lorengau. But it was being dismantled, which caused delay. The delay made little difference to us, for here in a wild and beautiful country were gathered together a score of enjoyable people glad to have us in their midst. Three of them were women.

One night a party of us was speeding in the schooner's motor pinnace from Mokareng across the bay to Lorengau, where a party was awaiting us. It is about twelve miles across, and the eight or so of us were singing the world-famous songs that people generally sing after some one has struck up a tune and set the cycle going. At length I struck up "Home, Sweet Home!" Quickly, sharply, some one said, "Stop!" I did, and then more gently he who had com-

manded me said, "That, Miss America, is one thing that one never sings in the islands."

§

The Hermit Islands form a large scattered group in those ill-charted waters just below the equator. We had sighted the group about noon one day when the sun smiled happily for a while and then sobered as with a grave thought. We had set out from Manus for Pelleluhun in the Ninnigoes, where a great cargo of copra awaited us. Captain Alys decided to anchor within the reef at the Hermits for the rest of the day, that we might again set sail for Pelleluhun before midnight and arrive there at daybreak. This would save tacking about among the dangerous and unfamiliar waters of the Ninnigoes during the hours before dawn.

Maron is the largest island of the Hermit group. Here a great coral reef, with an entrance not more than five hundred feet wide, forms a quiet lagoon where a ship may find safe harbor from any storm—if it can negotiate the narrow entrance. Alongside the other shore of Maron itself is safe anchorage for the island steamer, but here at the far end of the chain of atolls the reef lies boiling in a rainbow fury, and the island steamer *Marsina*—likewise most other craft—gives this track wide berth. But it was in our direct path, and Captain Alys was not the man to swerve from his course because of a reef.

There is something very fascinating and very terrible about a great reef, especially if you are going to negotiate a narrow channel into its still heart. This reef was a deadly, foaming thing, visible from many miles' distance because of its sullen greenish-yellow color. Great combers dash themselves upon it ceaselessly, relentlessly, breaking over it in fine

white spray and hungrily eddying about the coral that rises close to the surface.

Even my untrained eye could locate the gateway through the circle of coral, by the depth of color. But I heaved a sigh of relief when we were finally in the center of the large, perfectly quiet and pellucid lagoon.

With hours before them in which to idle, most of the crew went over to one of the small uninhabited islands to hunt plover and parrots for our supper.

The waters outside the reef were enough to make an angler delirious—fishing grounds untouched and unknown. An Aladdin's treasure of gorgeous darting jewels, among sea-gardens that blossom gloriously. The engineer and I couldn't stand it. Taking the pinnace and two boys, we headed for the outer reef to troll. Back at Lorengau we had prepared ourselves with bait for such an emergency. We had secured a great stem of a spider-lily plant—my two hands could not span it. The layers of the stem peel off, making excellent bait to attract fish. Our fishing equipment consisted of spider-lily, a hundred feet of clothes-line (stout clothes-line, as this was no piker fishing expedition) and seven hooks ranging in size from three to seven inches. I perched myself on the very nose of the pinnace, that I might look down into the marvels of the matchlessly beautiful submarine world.

Fathoms below us, but seeming close enough to touch, rose-colored trees put forth mauve blossoms. Other branched trees showed every shade of blue. Great frilled cushions lay on the sea-floor like scattered pretties of a royal boudoir. The fish are as colorful as the coral. Schools of large royal-blue fish clustered in shoals around our pinnace; there were others with the glory of the spread peacock. Our prize catch of the day was a huge emperor snapper, weighing about

twelve pounds, of the color of a pigeon-blood ruby. We caught two devilish little sharks, but we could see far below where great predatory sharks marauded among the bright schools.

Our first catch was a twenty-five-pound sea-pike. We had trolled four minutes with a five-inch hook baited with spider-lily at the end of our far-trailing line when the engineer cried "Strike!" He played the line out, using all his strength against the pulling of the fish at the other end, while the *Nuloa's* bo's'n kept the boat headed swiftly around the outer reef. The other boy stood tense, mallet in hand, to be of service when the big fish should be hauled in. Gradually the engineer began pulling in the line, and when we could see our catch he called to me: "Stay where you are, and look out for your feet!" In a few minutes I saw why. Above the surface of the water appeared a shining gray body, and two rows of white spikes gleamed from its upper and lower jaws. With a superhuman lift the engineer brought the great sea-pike over the stern, and for a moment it lashed and leaped on the floor of the boat. The kanaka's mallet came down with a mighty blow on its head. Still it thrashed about. Again the mallet descended, and this time the great fish lay still.

"Goddam!! Teef all same sark!" admired the bo's'n. It was indeed a terrible-looking mouth.

We got four sea-pike and two sharks within an hour; each landing was a thrilling and dangerous experience. Each one had to be crowned quickly with the mallet or those dreadful teeth would have avenged themselves.

We trolled all afternoon, with enormous success. Besides the sea-pikes and sharks, we had half a dozen large blue fish and the prize emperor snapper. But the ones we lost! This is no fish story. We lost all of our hooks. Whether they

were huge sharks that chewed them, or monster sea-pikes, we shall never know. But somewhere out there in the waters of the Hermit Islands some great fish are regretting the invasion of the white man.

The sky was turning yellow with sunset when, the last of our tackle gone, we turned back to the channel. We were running close to the reef, almost on the backs of the great combers that rushed on in eternal sequence. The knowledge that if the bo's'n miscalculated by a foot of his distance we should go over the crest and be dashed fatally on the rough coral, lessened the charm of this expedition not at all, because we knew we shouldn't go over. You can't fool a soda-water kanaka, and ours was a Manus lad at that.

We turned back, I say, against a yellow sunset flailed with wisps of black. It wasn't like a tropic sunset, rather like one belonging to the bleak north. It was not a cheerful sunset. But I looked about from my perch on the bow of the pinnace, and my heart was full of peace. All around us was a great and beautiful solitude.

Where the sea-eggs flame on the coral,
And the long-backed breakers croon
Their endless ocean legends
To the lazy locked lagoon.

It was like that.

And stark alone, within the rainbow circle of the seething reef, lay our ship. Her sails were furled, leaving her masts gaunt against the yellow sunset. She looked a lonely, isolated soul.

Our catch was duly admired, and turned over to the Chinese cook to salt promptly and hang up to dry. Only he didn't salt it enough, and it all spoiled the next day. Maskee!

At Mokareng we had acquired a great clam. Or rather, as it weighed only about fifty pounds, it wasn't such a great one as clams go out there. It had deeply fluted shells, perilous shells, for they remain slightly parted, ready to bite anything that intrudes within. All of us had given the great white clam lots of breathing space. The cook had made it into a stew with cocoanut milk. It was a good dinner that night! There were fresh fish, clam stew, and a pie made from little parrots that the boys had brought back from the island.

It was nearly midnight when the *Nuloa's* engine was started up for the sail to Pelleluhun. Verily our lives were in the hollow of the skipper's hand that night, for the clouded sky made utter darkness and Captain Alys had never been within this reef before.

On the topdeck I stretched out on a skylight, quite out of the way, to watch him, not without a little excited queer feeling in the pit of my stomach. I knew the danger if he misjudged the channel, and there would be no help from any corner in case of shipwreck.

Instantly the anchor was up and the engine under way the little man became part of the ship. Slowly we pushed forward. Keenly alive, constantly moving from port to starboard, peering into the dark with his night glasses, back and forth on the bridge, the skipper called his commands tersely to the native quartermaster. "Port!" . . . "Starboard! Liklik, das all!" . . . "Steady! Liklik, you bloody fool! You no savvy *liklik!*" . . . "Ste-edd-y!" And all the while the roar of the reef was coming closer.

Then closer, closer the booming, almost drowning out the master's commands. We were at the channel. A few tense minutes of uncertainty. . . . Above the crashing came the skipper's clear "Stead-y!" . . . The roar was still around

us . . . and then, at blessed last, came a cheery "There we are!" A breaking of tension . . . "Guess we're all clear of the reef now."

And so we left Maron for the Ninnigoes.





XXIX

MONSOON

AT last the northwest monsoons had set in for fair. It was an experience I had been hankering for, ho! ho!

We came among the Ninnigoes very early in the morning. For me at least it had not been too pleasant a sail after leaving the Hermits. The wind had risen, and the sea was choppy. And I had suddenly awakened to the fact that the *Nuhoa* was badly ventilated and very smelly. I fought with a growing nausea that I would have died rather than admit.

Pelleluhun belongs to an atoll group of about twelve islands, these making up one of the largest and most valuable cocoanut plantations of New Guinea. There was no anchorage at Pelleluhun. The reef extends far out around the island. Despite this handicap and the disagreeableness of the oncoming monsoon, it was calm enough to permit the loading of two thousand bags of copra, under extreme difficulty. The plantation manager, welcoming us as a gift of God, said that it was the only possible weather thereabouts for the past month.

The *Marsina* had passed there on her last trip, but the sea had been too rough to risk the lifting of copra. The schooner drifted about while the pinnace and a cutter brought the bags of copra over the reef through the breakers. At

times we were two and a half miles out at sea when the laden boats, manned with shouting, precariously balancing kanakas, fought out to us. The bags of copra had been accumulating on the island for months. There were twice as many as the *Nuloa* could load.

Needing exercise, I took a turbulent trip over to the plantation, and was thoroughly drenched when I arrived. It was a great dismal place, with row on row of prolific palms, but on it was no sign of green grass, shade trees, or flowering bushes; there were just coral and sand underfoot. The plantation manager, standing at the bridge checking copra as the bags were loaded into pinnace and cutter, was a prematurely aging young Australian with haunted eyes. His skin was an unhealthy yellow, and he was gaunt and fever-ridden. Pelleluhun is a ghastly place for fever. The mosquitoes swarm in clouds. Later on this shy, affable young man was our companion through dire distress, and I learned to call him "Mike"; he always called me "Lass."

I learned, before we left Pelleluhun, that his nerves were pretty well shot. He had been the only white man on the station for nearly two years. He had had no communication with the world except now and then when the *Marsina* stopped with mail and to take off copra. But the waters about Pelleluhun are wicked in rough weather, and many times the island steamer would attempt an approach and then proceed on her way while he watched her eagerly and hungrily for the brief cheer and companionship which he could not have until a luckier day.

Mike's furlough was long overdue. He had been promised relief from Rabaul many weeks before, but none had been sent. Lonely months on end in these isolated out-stations play strange havoc with men. I met in Rabaul a plantation

manager who had been completely forgotten or ignored for eighteen months, and when finally relief was sent they found him longlong—daft. Later he recovered most of his balance under happier influences, but he continued to be more or less of a hatter.

Leaving Pelleluhun, we sailed over to the Haina Islands, about five miles on, to lift some more copra that had been waiting transportation for many weeks. Here, in one of the most beautiful blue lagoons of the Pacific, we anchored. It was an ideal tropic spot to see—coral islands, a still lagoon, outleaning palms, white sandy beach, the silhouette of natives going back and forth along the shore.

For the moment the mate was not busy, and together we leaned our arms on the rail and looked out on the lovely sight. All at once, among a bunch of kanakas on the foredeck, we heard a commotion, shrieks of delighted laughter. We paid no attention to it at first, but the hilarity continued and accelerated. Then the mate looked up and listened, and started forward to investigate the merriment. Curious, I gained a vantage point and looked down. It all happened like lightning. One of the boys had the hen that we had acquired at Pak. He had plucked it, all except two pitifully comic tail-feathers and was allowing it to run frantically around in a circle cleared for it on the deck. The mate took one look at the poor agonized thing, and I shall never forget his face. The native instigator of the torture also saw him, and for one second too long was rooted to the spot. Then the mate made a leap for the boy, grasped him with one hand by the shoulder and with the other hand gripped his wool. The terrified boy gave a mighty wrench to get away, and the white man in his rage-blindness tore a portion of the scalp away, from crown to brow, while the native made one run-

ning leap over the side of the schooner, careless alike of sharks and the watery distance to the shore.

For a moment the mate watched him go; he had literally scalped the kanaka, and stood with the dripping skin in his fist. Then he flung the horrid handful from him, and with one swift cleave of a copra knife put the wretched hen out of its misery.

By the time we were ready to leave this island group, the *Nuloa* was about the most uncomfortable place in the world. It was raining. Every inch of the deck space was piled considerably more than head-high with bags of copra. This was bearable, but the sickish sweet smell of dried copra is something that one must get used to to find tolerable; and with copra come millions of little black copra bugs that float, rather than fly, in the air. Moreover, little white worms—embryo moths—seem to hang everywhere, and have a disconcerting habit of lodging down one's back. Furthermore, the roaches that have their natural habitat in the hold, being driven out by cargo, join their playmates in the cabin. And the hold breeds considerable roaches! At mess the copra bugs were likely to lodge on food; we would brush them away from our eyes and faces, and it was always well to examine closely the porous holes in bread, and even tap the slice on the table, before eating it. Copra bugs in bread are much worse than weevils in biscuit.

Remaining in the cabin longer than the hours necessarily devoted to sleep was unthinkable; so, despite my traitorous raincoat, I spent damp hours forlornly among the copra bags on the topdeck. When it rained very hard I wrapped myself in a bit of old sail. I have a lingering suspicion that it was here that that hellish little germ of malaria penetrated my astoundingly excellent constitution.

We could not lift all the copra of Mike's far-flung plantation at one time. As it was, the Plimsoll was gravely low. So the skipper planned to concentrate our cargo at Mokareng, and return to Pelleluhun for the rest. It would take about ten days. Mike was starved for companionship, and seriously in need of a change of scene. He joined us for an excursion trip.

But out in those regions Time has never yet caught up with the world. It was not ten days but many weeks before Mike saw Pelleluhun again.

§

At Mokareng this time we picked up another passenger—a plantation inspector from Rabaul named Caxton. He was a strange man, beyond middle age, an Englishman who had spent many years of his life in India; and he was a surly man, sometimes to the point of bruising rudeness. I judge that his misanthropy was due in part to the fact that he was filled with malaria. Caxton was a big man with sinews of steel and the fearless heart of a pioneer, and he had a face like a Gilbert and Sullivan pirate. I had known him in Rabaul, and I had a prodigious respect and a sneaking liking for him. He tolerated me because I was not an Australian, all of whom he detested. He qualified his tolerance by volunteering that the next worse thing to an Australian was an American. I told him I thought all Englishmen were wonderful. Whereupon he gave me a fierce, blood-curdling look.

At Mokareng the mate watched the sky anxiously. It was a cold lowering sky, and the sea, even in quiet Seeadlerhafen, was a sullen gray. He had battled against too many monsoons to treat them lightly, and he had misgivings about the condition of the *Nuloa*. Sails and lines were rotten, he said. The

former skipper had carried his economy too far. But Captain Alys, taking stock of the situation, decided to set out once more.

The sea was unsettled; a great restless swell handled us as if we were a bit of a cork. In twelve hours the monsoon was at our heels again. Through the rain there was no horizon—just thick, ominous gray. Beating down on us were shafts of rain, so heavy at times that it was difficult for me to stand against the deluge. There was no shelter except in the unthinkable atmosphere of the cabin, where every port was battened down and the air reeking with nauseous humidity. The tattered canvas stretched over the little poop-deck proved worthless for the shelter after a few hours of saturation.

Caxton and Mike took the situation philosophically, even cheerfully; they had great raincoats. Despite the terrible lurching of the *Nuloa* they spent hours stretched out in their bunks sleeping or reading. Not so I. My stomach wouldn't stand it. Air, even air sodden with rain and blowing a sixty mile gale, was what I wanted, in the beginning of that monsoon. Wrapped in a piece of sail canvas that smelled vilely of mildew, I stretched miserably on deck in the one remaining chair.

We were now learning with alarming frequency that what the mate had feared was true—the lines were rotten. Once a snapped rope sent the mainsail-boom lurching less than a foot over my head. The schooner careened wildly. Yells of the kanaka crew. Whole-souled cursing of mate and skipper. Limp protest from me. Then it was that I retired to my bunk, sick as anything on earth, seasick and with a rapidly developing case of gastric fever. I wasn't much interested in

what I died of, but somehow I didn't want to have my head unexpectedly bashed in with a lurching boom.

And the monsoon continued. There was no sign of its ever stopping. To keep a set course was out of the question. At best, with both sails and engine, we were making less than two knots. A destination was no longer anything to be considered; only to keep in the open sea, free of reefs and scattered atolls, that was the thing to be desired. My unventilated cabin was not a good place to be sick in. There were millions of moths from the recently removed copra bags; copra bugs still hung, with little animation, in mid-air; three great cockroaches frolicked among belongings on the narrow settee adjacent to my bunk.

No one knew how really ill I was except Elisa, the Fiji steward, who at intervals during the four days of the storm appeared like a black angel with a glass of sparkling gingerale in his hand. Caxton, bless him, came in every once in a while to see if I was still alive; not very sympathetic, for in the South Pacific one doesn't get sympathy for fever or seasickness. Every one must expect to get fever; and if you are not immune to seasickness, why elect to travel on a schooner in monsoon season! But his chipper voice demanding, "And how do you feel now, me darlin'?" and his fierce, humorous eyes that had looked quizzically and penetratingly upon most of the joys and sorrows of the world, were strangely comforting and substantial in the uncertainty of our plight. Sympathy! Not from him. Not for anybody. His nearest approach to sympathy was to chuckle, pat my head, and say, "She wanted to see the world, she did."

Three days dragged out—I don't clearly remember how. I do remember that I sometimes wanted terribly to remove

or straighten a heavy iron crown that bore down on my head; it bothered me, this weight, even when I dozed off, but it clung there tenaciously.

Very late on the third night I couldn't stand it in the cabin any longer. The *Nuloa* was in the trough of the sea evidently, for we were rolling at what seemed to me to be a 90-degree angle, steadily, and the ship creaked, groaned laboriously with every roll. Furniture that was not braced fast and crockery could be heard rhythmically clattering back and forth with the motion, and the clanking of the boom above me with each roll was an unutterably dismal sound. We seemed merely to be wallowing in the wroth sea, not progressing at all. I couldn't bear it. With pillow and raincoat, and wrapped in a coat, I made the deck and the chair that had been moved to the poopdeck.

Oh the gratefulness of that fresh air! The rain had temporarily ceased, and at intervals stars shone forth among windstorm clouds. A Buka boy was at the helm; by the light of the hurricane lamp careening over his head I saw that a great bright red patch of color circled his right eye, and parrot feathers decorated his wool. He talked in monotone, in pidgin, with a Manus lad who crouched beside him, doubtless the watch-boy lying down on his job.

The sight of the stars was brief. In a few moments all was darkness of storm again, and the wind was rushing like a mad thing the length of the Pacific driving the rain with a fierce lash. The only light in the world was the dim circle from the hurricane lamp above the helm, back of me. And then something happened. The mate descended from the navigating deck. He was not an abnormally large man, but his shadowy form in its huge storm-coat looked enormous on

the little deck. At the wheel he paused for a sharp command to the recreant watch-boy to get on his job.

The re-rising gale was shooting gusts of rain down the narrow lane of the poopdeck. I was too worn out and ill to care whether I got drenched or not. The mate brushed by the back of my chair without realizing that any one was in it. He paused beyond me at the rail to look out at sea. The wind blew the cape of his storm-coat. Suddenly, as if in utter exasperation, he clenched his fists and shook them at the heavens, shouting: "Damn you, Hughey! Why don't you come down and fight it out like a man!" He had long had a score to settle with Old-Hughey-on-Top. He had a great contempt for Hughey. Now, with nerves on edge after days and sleepless nights of riding a South Pacific monsoon, his exasperation had reached its limit. And here he was, like an impotent child, threatening the power behind the storm, challenging Deity to fisticuffs.

Then he turned and stumbled on me. I managed a feeble "Hello!" At the same minute, without warning, except for the Buka boy's shout, "Big fella rain, he come," we were attacked by a downpour resembling nothing so much as the concentrated focusing of a million or so large fire-hose. There wasn't time to get into the cabin. So the mate opened wide his greatcoat, and with his back to the torrent he leaned down and sheltered me safely and snugly, as a comforting hen shelters her chicks, until the downpour abated.

It was early in the morning, some hours later, when I had blessedly dozed off once more, that I was nearly thrown out of my bunk with a lurch of the *Nuloa* which must nearly have capsized her. There was a loud noise of flapping canvas

and the free-swinging boom. These and the confused shrieks of the kanaka crew and the voices of mate and skipper rose above the wind and sea. I didn't know what had happened, but I did instinctively know that we were helpless; the rocking ship felt disabled.

The old sails had reached the limit of resistance, and all of them, mains'l, fores'l, and stays'l, had suddenly and simultaneously ripped across, like so much rotten taffeta. And with them had gone some of the unrenewed lines. We had no wireless. Nowhere was there any help for us if the storm kept up.

I was too ill to care much. In the morning, when I dressed and wandered wanly out on deck, all was a forlorn sight. The masts, bare of sails, looked plucked; spread out and completely covering the decks were the useless sails, each divided neatly in two pieces, as cleanly as if they had been cut. There wasn't enough spare canvas on board to be of any real use. The engineer judged that our petrol supply would last for a day and a half. No one knew exactly where we were; the skipper judged that we were not far from the Admiraltys.

But the storm was abating. As if satisfied with this spectacular coup, the wind had died, and the rain was no longer a deluge.

By ten A. M. there was a faint horizon. Then, unexpectedly, about noon, the sun came out. Not tearily, not in the least contritely; after four days of fury, sea and sky beamed at us as if nothing had ever happened. And there in the distance, we saw the island of Naru! We were in the midst of the Admiraltys.

We limped into the lagoon at sunset, under engine power. Rose-colored was the world and blessed with peace. Out-

side, the sea was still turbulent, but within the reef-locked lagoon it seemed that no storm had ever penetrated.

There are seven wireless stations in Melanesia. The nearest to us was at Lorengau, on Manus, sixty-five miles down the coast of the island. The *Nuloa* would be laid up for several days, while the sails were patched the best possible with available materials. In about two weeks the *Marsina* would be due on her six-weekly round, and would pick us up at Lorengau. There was but one way to get to Lorengau—to take to the open pinnace and trust to the still restless sea. We had just about enough petrol left to negotiate the sixty-five miles in the motor pinnace. Did I want to risk it, they asked, or would I take my chances on the schooner and eventually limp down to Lorengau with patched sails?

Risk it! I had had enough of schooners for a while. I said I'd bush-walk to Lorengau if I had to.

It was early morning when we started—Caxton, Mike, the engineer, two natives, and I. With the usual improvidence of the islands, we were equipped with no fresh water, but we did have two ham sandwiches apiece, three bottles of beer, and the schooner's last bottle of ginger-beer. The motor pinnace was an open boat, with no shelter from the burning sun, nor were there paddle or oars for the quite possible emergency if our engine gave out, as it sometimes had. The natives' rations were two cocoanuts apiece. All of our possessions were piled in a dory that trailed behind us by a rope. On our right extended sixty-five miles of impenetrable jungle coast inhabited by the notoriously untrustworthy natives of Manus; beyond the protecting reef on our left lay the great sea billowing broadly from a still restless undercurrent.

But it was a good-humored party; the monsoon was temporarily spent. The fierce sunshine soaked into us, burned us. But ahead of us, God willing, was the serenity of Lorengau. Our coats made cushions, fortunately, for by afternoon you could not lay a hand on the scorching wood of the pinnace.

The potentialities of grave danger were there, no doubt. There is no knowing what would have happened to us if we had capsized on coral, or gone adrift with a disabled engine, or been forced to seek refuge in the jungle, or, worst of all, if we had undergone the agony of thirst. Caxton would neither eat nor drink. He must have been thirsty during those burning hours, but the old wardog knew the wisdom of disciplining his body under such conditions. The rest of us consumed our individual rations before tea-time.

For most of the day we skirted the shore, well within the reef. Borne on an off-shore breeze, came the dank, sweet smell of the jungle that ran riot down to the water's edge, and with it a delicious draft of coolness. We passed occasional soda-water villages, where in the bosky shadows round grass huts were visible. Long palms leaned attentively far out to sea. Rank groves of banana palms and sago gave promise of food, at least, should we meet with mishap along the coast. Few natives were abroad, but once we crossed the course of a large Manus sailing canoe manned by five bushy-haired, almost naked savages, who hove to and silently watched our passing. Half-way on our journey there was a small plantation on the coastal fringe of the jungle; on the beach a Chinaman stood waving something white, in invitation for us to stop by, but we merely waved back and continued on our way. Within the haven of the reef the motion of the sea

was merely a great rolling swell that bothered us not at all.

Eight hours it took us. Then, at last, before the sun went down, we saw Seeadlerhafen in the distance . . . and Lorengau . . . and safety after days of turmoil!





XXX

LORENGAU THE BLEST

TRANSCENDING all the faults of the tropics and their way of life is the virtue of their whole-souled hospitality. Waifs of the storm, we were welcomed with open arms into this isolated community of islanders. Like an ailing child, I threw myself on the comforting bosom of Lorengau.

I was harbored from that night forward within the native-built grass-roofed bungalow of the trader and his wife. Mike found shelter with the customs officer and his wife, the only other white woman on Manus, and so did the engineer. Caxton took possession of a bamboo out-building on the trading station, and dined with us.

It was December, and the gardens of this small clearing of Lorengau were gay. Yellow and crimson hibiscus were like great butterflies. The air was heavy with frangipani and lemon blossoms. Great golden papaws hung ripe and luscious from the heads of tall thin trees, where the flying foxes clung at nighttime. Orchids cascaded from spreading quela trees. The broad road leading from the native hospital at one end of the settlement to jungle at the other end was bordered

with feathery casuarina trees whose branches lifted a lyric tracery against the sky.

Word had got back to Lorengau, perhaps by the incomprehensible jungle wireless, that we had foundered. Our presence reassured these good people, though the *Nuloa* lay stripped of sails and petrol in the lagoon at Naru. She would probably be able to reach Lorengau by herself when her sails were repaired, if the weather remained calm. But the engineer's first act was to wireless Rabaul of our plight and the schooner's position, that the *Marsina* might go to her rescue if necessary.

Caxton next wirelessly to the effect that he and Mike and I were stranded unless the *Marsina* picked us up. And, in faith, we were. With the monsoon season upon us, if the *Marsina* failed us on this round there was no chance of our getting back to Rabaul for the next two months. I didn't mind—one place was as good as another to me, and Lorengau was beautiful—but I visioned Caxton frothing at the mouth in the necessary and complete inactivity of this island station if he were among us long. And it was coming Christmas time.

Distil the essence of your dreams of a South Pacific island, then close your eyes and vision Lorengau on Manus. It is a large island, dominating the Admiraltys, and back of the station clearing rise dark green tiers of hills. Some one who cared must have laid Lorengau out. Palms fringe its white beach, and cocoanut palms crest the high hill from which the D. O.'s large bungalow commands sight of the sea and islands for leagues around. A stony road, that lies white in the moonlight, winds bumpily up from the beach to the large bungalow belonging to customs and the adjacent house of Mr. Wireless. The gardens of both bungalows almost tumble over a gorge that sheers, jungle-choked, down to a river that

has finished its course to the sea. The river banks are gaudy with ginger flowers; lianas trail from the overhanging branches hung thick with tropic moss.

At the junction of the roads there is a tennis court, which until we blew in no one had recently used. But our tennis wasn't much to brag of. It usually took place shortly before sunset. There would always be quite a gallery, for the dozen whites would be supplemented by twice as many entranced kanakas. The kanakas were informally dressed in loin-cloths, their wool free and wild or gathered into a psyche, their bodies welted in strange, geometric tribal markings, their noses spiked with a bone-pin or dangling a shell-ring or crescent. Sometimes a lad girt in a crimson laplap, and with a red hibiscus in his hair, would sit cross-legged in the grass across the road playing a long reed flute plaintively, just to please himself. From a spreading quela tree at one corner of the court there spilled a spray of perfect white orchids. It was the time of the waxing moon, and before the disk of the

sun had dipped the great moon was rising, so that while there was yet a flood of deep rose in the west the moon cast a silver shimmer over the water. Imperceptibly day slipped into ethereal night.



On such moonlight nights outrigger canoes steal silently into Lorengau from all over the islands, for the island steamer on its round will stop here, and the far-lying plantations send mail or messages into Lorengau to be held against her arrival.

Sometimes the canoes come fifty miles. In such cases, the messenger stops only long enough to leave his dispatch and gather what mail or supplies await his master, then as silently

as he has come he turns back to make the best of the full moon.

Perhaps I loved Lorengau so well because it gave utter peace after turmoil. Awakening there in the morning was a thing apart from all other awakenings of my existence. It was fragrant and cool, with the sweetness of the adjacent jungle and the still closer lemon tree and frangipani. I awoke early, to the murmuring of kanakas talking together as they began the day's work, or passed by the road beyond the garden. I would lean out of my window as I quartered a great green-skinned orange, and watch the pleasing sight of my brown cousins at work while I idled. Sometimes, in the early morning, a string of bush-kanakas passed along, led by half a dozen savage warriors and trailed by their tattooed and grass-skirted marys carrying their babies in baskets on their backs. These came down from the hills to look around and perhaps to barter at the trade-store belonging to my host. Or, as likely, they came down to barter for the sea-water from the natives living along the beach. For the hill native regards as a luxury the salt he gets from the boiled-down sea-water. But it is considered that the sea and its treasure belongs to the native dwellers along its shore, and the salt water is sold by the gourdful to the innocents of the hills.

The beautiful bungalow of the D. O. on the top of a high hill was slowly going to ruin for lack of care, and that of the doctor, on a rising slightly beneath it, was in even sadder condition except for the scarlet splendor of hundreds of hibiscus bushes growing wild around it. For Lorengau had not had a doctor for a long time, and the last D. O. had died and not yet been replaced. He had been a huge man, weighing nearly four hundred pounds. For years the winding climb to his bungalow had been beyond his endurance. So he had

had a chair built on bamboo poles for him, and every time he went up or down the hillside four kanakas bore him on their shoulders. On the up-hill journey it took eight boys to complete the trip; four started at the foot, and were relieved by four fresh bearers half-way up the hill.

Who should turn up at Lorengau but Lowforth, whom we had left stranded and jobless with the Dennises. It seemed that he had got a break at last. The Meisters' plantation and comfortable bungalow needed an overseer, and he had landed the job. He was still the same kindly, shiftless roamer, but there was about him now the air of a man who has a place in the world.

There being a wireless at Lorengau, we got news of the world. This was no Associated Press Bureau, mind you, but we did keep in touch with weather conditions in England and Sydney, rumors of war in China, and the latest aviation achievements. Every day at tea-time Mr. Wireless (no one ever calls him anything else) dropped in on us with a badly typewritten sheet and read off the headlines.

We didn't know what to expect of the *Marsina*. The first report from Rabaul was that she would stop at Lorengau to pick us up. Two days later the radio message was that she was not going to stop at Manus this trip, in which event we should be stranded over Christmas. Ten days elapsed before we knew we were going to see Rabaul again that year. After all, the *Marsina* did stop and pick us up.

In the meantime the *Nuloa* appeared in Seeadlerhafen. By the grace of God and a fair wind she had made the trip down to safety and plentiful petrol. But the skipper was furious, and we couldn't blame him. He had expected the engineer to land us at Lorengau and then return in the pinnacle to Naru. As he had not done so, both the skipper and

the mate had concluded that we had come to grief. But the engineer had become so fond of Lorengau and his exceedingly comfortable billet that he had airily waved aside all thought of responsibility. Captain Alys was torn between relief at our safety and wrath at the casual treatment of his anxiety. For a while he was in high dudgeon. Perhaps it was this incident that finally persuaded the engineer to swallow the anchor and strike out for the gold fields. At any rate he didn't make another trip. Nor did the *Nuloa*. Weeks after, upon her return to Rabaul, the powers that were decided that the experimental voyage had not been a commercial success. The schooner was reconditioned and sent back to Fiji.

And so we who had adventured together into uncharted waters, and our ship, have eventually gone our separate ways. Captain Alys returned to Sydney. The engineer tried his luck with gold. And the mate? The mate is dead. He died at Madang of black-water fever. The thought of it twists my heart, for he was my faithful friend. I found later something that he had never told me; it was perhaps the real reason why he would not return to his own country as a failure. He was the grandson of an earl.



XXXI

BACK IN RABAUL

AFTER weeks on end of comparative solitude, capped by the lazy uneventful life at Lorengau, where only nightfall and daybreak mark the passing of time, the closely crowded, convivial *Marsina* was bewildering. She was more than ever bursting with passengers, for whoever could was returning to Rabaul or near-by plantations for Christmas. Planters, recruiters, and gold miners were sleeping on deck and on settees in the salon and dining-room. The bar was working overtime. Aboard there were no tourists. The gold rushers were the hellions of the ship. If they had struck gold, they were celebrating, and every one was in on the party. If they had failed, they celebrated anyhow to cheer themselves up.

There is something about the *Marsina*, beastly uncomfortable as she is, that is part of the charm of the islands. The *Marsina* belongs to the islanders; no one else would voluntarily travel on her. She is hot from engine and galley. She rolls like a toy skiff. She reeks of various unsweet odors from stem to stern. When her whistle blows, whoever is reclining

within a radius of fifteen feet of the funnel gets a shower of condensed steam. There isn't a foot of empty space for exercise, and her foredeck carries a cargo of petrol, cattle, and kanakas. She is not very clean, and she is painted the most depressing shade of brown known to man, and twice to date she has been afire and been sunk to salvage her. But she has atmosphere. And if you like the islands and all the queer, topsyturvy life out there, you can't help liking the *Marsina*, no matter how glad you are to get off her.

For two days I had seen among the passengers a tall lank young man, as nondescriptly dressed in threadbare khaki as the rest, but with an impeccably waxed mustache. I was haunted by the thought, "Who is that man!" That one should meet a "townie" from New York aboard the *Marsina* was too improbable to credit. He wore a great turquoise ring set in beaten silver on his left ring-finger. I had seen it before. Then some one said to me, "There's another American on board, Miss America. He's an anthropologist bound for Aitape." They didn't know his name.

I myself didn't much resemble the young woman that had started adventuring from New York nearly a year before. I was now as brown as a Polynesian, somewhat trampish as to attire, and my hair that had not been cut for many weeks was desperately in need of care. Better shaggy hair than the ministrations of the *Nulua's* Chinese cook as a barber.

Well, who was the mysterious stranger? We soon met of course. He had been my dinner partner back in New Jersey at one of my last pre-adventure parties. I should have known him. No one but C. J. would take mustache wax into the interior of New Guinea, or could wear an air of distinction in such threadbare clothes as were his.

I intimated that I had heard he was now pursuing anthro-

pology, and was assured that, like myself, his being there was merely in the interest of unsatisfied curiosity and not of science. The handle of "anthropologist" had been thrust upon him in Rabaul, where the community was more or less bewildered by a very recent influx of young Americans wandering over the face of the earth with no stern, or even articulate, purpose. There was still another one back in Rabaul waiting for a draft from home that would enable him to join C. J. in Aitape, with a movie camera and a ton or so of scientific equipment wherewith to study cannibals and their habitat. This was Paul, whom I was later to meet. Besides the little matter of the draft, Paul was at the moment enmeshed in a tangle of Australian red tape, and apparently in grave danger of strangulation thereby.

C. J. had been promised what I had bitterly regretted was closed to me because of my sex, a government patrol into the interior with the D. O. at Aitape. The object of such a patrol is to collect taxes, to impress upon the natives that the nebulous thing they know as Gov'men' is still there, and to try any cases that need the D. O.'s intervention.

The *Marsina* stopped in at Maty Island in the Admiraltys. On this and the neighboring island of Aua live a race entirely different from the surrounding natives of Melanesia and Micronesia. They are uncommonly good-looking people, tall and straight. The women's hair is soft and wavy and black, and hangs like a mane around their shoulders. The ordinary dress of the women is a single leaf fastened to a string about their loins. But on boat days they wear laplaps of broad royal-blue and gold stripes. They are a Malayo-Polynesian race, and do not intermarry with the surrounding tribes. But this in-breeding has seemed to create no moral or physical degeneracy. The rumor is that the people on Aua

and Maty are dying out. There were once many more than the respective 800 and 275.

On Aua is a white man named Charlie Mathies who has lived there over thirty years now, with no connection with the outside world. Many years ago he and his partner set up a trading station among the natives. There was an uprising, the partner was murdered. It was then that many natives fled in unseaworthy canoes. The surviving trader put down the uprising, and when things had quieted down set himself up as dictator of the island and married the chief's daughter. Until a few years ago he had cut himself off from all contact with the world, even from Rabaul. But of late years he has had a change of heart, and has compromised with civilization to the extent of subscribing to a dozen magazines, some of them American. These, presumably, are left for him at Maty Island, and fetched to him by outrigger.

Three days later I bade C. J. good-by at Aitape, where he boarded the government schooner *Aloha* in company with the D. O. He was very shabby, and he had sixty-five dollars to his name, plus tinned provisions enough to last him for several months. But his mustache was waxed. And a splendid adventure was before him.

Two days out from Rabaul, I was taken ill. Fever. I had plenty of nurses. The Germans gave me pink quinine, and the Australians gave me white. And I alternately shivered and sweated so miserably that I didn't care what happened or what color I took into my agonized stomach. But my head rang like a carillon, and the odd, feverish, sickish odor that one's body exudes during an attack of malaria hung about me like vapor.

Weak and wobbly, I returned to Rabaul. Two days later I went to the hospital with dengue or breakbone fever.

The hospital at Rabaul is a pleasant place—when one is able to sit up and take notice. It is a frame building set in a garden high on Namanula Hill, overlooking New Britain and the sea. Mornings and nights are fragrant and cool. Its few rooms are huge and high-ceilinged, and the great double doors leading out to front and back verandas are never closed.

At this particular time Sari was a patient at the hospital—the yellow-haired, scorpion-tongued, genteelly-frowned-upon woman from Sydney and God-knows-where. Sari had hit Rabaul shortly before I myself had left it months before. She had been imported from “down south” by the trading firm which had given me a job. Until that time the owners had apparently considered men more practicable as clerks than girls; but having a sudden change of heart, they took this flier in females. It was not an unqualified success.

Sari impressed herself deeply on the consciousness of Rabaul.

She had started in all wrong if she wanted to gain favor with the feminine elegancia of Rabaul, but I doubt if she cared about that. She was a “Pommy,” meaning English, and she made no attempt to conceal her feeling of superiority about the fact. The first rumor Rabaul had of her was that on the ship up she had declared she intended to “commercialize her affections.” It was a bad start. Women don’t talk about such commercialization in Rabaul.

Sari was a rather terrible-looking young woman; she seemed hard, not like a courtesan but like a moral anarchist. And how cruel her tongue was! She had a superb flow of comparisons and profanity. Also, she had extraordinarily keen perceptions; she could and did go below surfaces in a way that was a delight to witness, if you happened not to be the victim. She was naturally sloppy about her dress; slipper

straps went unbuttoned, uneven skirts were hiked enough to reveal an expanse of leg above rolled stockings; and yet, sometimes, dressed soberly in a black dinner dress of respectable length, her short yellow hair sleek, and she sobered by a temporary moodiness, she looked like a lady.

I had worked side by side with her for a short time, but I had neither cultivated nor avoided her. I was afraid she might pick on my weaknesses, and hold them up to my shrinking gaze. However, for some reason Sari laid off me. Maybe she never had time to get around to me. I don't know.

But the men liked her, despite her sudden fits of brooding.

And now here she was in the hospital with me. One morning, in impossible orange-and-black pajamas with a gorgeously embroidered dragon across her chest, she appeared and perched herself on my bed. She'd been pretty sick with fever for over a week and was in a softened mood. There was something youthful and almost appealing about her (she admitted thirty-two).

Then, and for the next few days when we were thrown into close contact, I had opportunity to learn more about her. Her twin brother had been killed in the war, which had nearly broken her heart. Thereafter had come a checkered career. I gathered that she had worked in a munitions factory in England as a volunteer. Then came a long illness, leaving her with a blank memory. A wealthy Englishwoman took an interest in her and cared for her. Sari's memory came back, but still she labored under a mental and physical lethargy.

Finally Lady N. took Sari out with her to her country estate to convalesce, and there, suddenly, like a miracle, her lethargy vanished and she became happy. She described the reaction to me. It was springtime in England, daffodil time, and at the country place there were fields all golden with the

daffodils. It was when she came upon these that her lethargy suddenly lifted; Sari's steel-blue eyes brightened at the recollection. All she wanted was to be among the daffodils, knee-deep, and to gather her arms full. This she did, for days, carrying them back to the house and arranging them in baskets to be sent to war hospitals in London.

After the war she married an Australian. She says he was a beast, and she lived with him for only three weeks. Then she told me that she had a little son. His miniature showed a blond boy with wistful eyes and mouth. Where was he, I asked. Sari said he was then in charge of a married couple in Sydney who adored him and wanted to adopt him. But she loved him herself, she would never give him up. He was much better off as he was than with her, she said; she couldn't stand the strain of model behavior that she underwent when she was with him. He had never seen her smoke, for instance, and never heard her swear. He was five then. When he is seven he is to return to England, where Lady N. is going to have him educated.

I would let Sari go on talking by the hour; I lay watching her, my hands clasped behind my head. She had such an appalling knowledge of life! It was when she talked of her little boy, chiefly, that I saw the woman behind the gaudy, shoddy exterior. She told me about the advent of her baby, her eyes softened by the memory.

"I wanted my baby so terribly," she went on, "though I hated its father. They suggested to me, when I discovered it was coming, that I get rid of it, and I could have torn them to pieces. . . . I shall never forget the night that I quickened. I was living in Sydney alone; I was sleeping out on a balcony underneath the stars at the time. All of a sudden I felt myself quicken. . . . Then I knew the most curious sen-

sation. I seemed to be lifted out of myself, away from the world, carried up among the stars. I was part of them. It was almost a delirium. I felt holy, as if nothing that belonged to the earth could touch me. I was too pure for earthly contamination."

§

On New Year's Day, free at last of breakbone fever and out of the hospital, I stood on the top of Namanula Hill looking down upon Rabaul. The roots of my heart had grown down to the soil here. The ineffable sweetness of millions of tropical blossoms came to me. I was like a woman who loves a man and yet realizes his unforgivable weaknesses. Such is New Guinea.

Chattering marys passed me on their way to the boom, or open market. On their heads they bore prodigious loads of pineapples, oranges, little finger-bananas, delicious galip nuts, papaws. Pickaninnies trudged along beside them, finger in mouth. A boy in violent laplap swaggered by, wanting to be admired; gorgeous hibiscus behind ears and in arm-bands, and a great blue butterfly fluttering at a length of string from his woolly pate.

I stood there thoughtfully that day, looking down upon Rabaul. I knew the time was coming when I must tear up roots and leave this beautiful place. I cast an appraising eye upon the future. No future here; only deadening of the sense of responsibility and of ambition under the anesthetic of beauty. With the tropics, unless you are a child of the tropics, you must love them and ruthlessly leave them. Already the thought smote me: "How ever can I cope with the struggle for existence back in New York!" I began to have an uneasy feeling that it was going to be a bitter fight. It was.

Strange sounds came up to me from the town far below. There was a fusillade of firecrackers, the shouting of many people, the clanging of brass instruments. Chinatown was holding a joss parade.

I am here to witness that a joss parade is hell let loose. It is a day when the sacred dragon frightens away all evil spirits—a purification by fire. Two processions were weaving through Chinatown, preceded and followed by the beating of drums and the clashing of cymbals. The principal figure of each procession was the joss, a Celestial who wears a huge dragon's head and trails a long flowing robe. From every house in Chinatown dangled a dozen or more long ropes of firecrackers. The joss, accompanied by two agile Chinese attendants who fan him frantically and smother the fire when his garments frequently ignite, dances down the road, turning this way and that. At each house he pauses, the crackers are ignited, and the dragon-devil dances, hops, and leaps among the exploding firecrackers. They burst all over and around him. Then, with head down, executing his strange, frenzied dancing progress, he repeats the onslaught at the next doorway, which is a few feet away, for Chinatown is crowded in Rabaul.

The joss is changed at intervals, giving up his glory to another who dons the devil-dragon head and smoldering robes, for no man could stand for long the maddening heat, cannon-ading, and physical pain that accompanies the enacting of the chief rôle in this ceremony.

The joss parade lasted three hours, and Chinatown quickly assumed a bombarded appearance; the path of the dragons was ankle-deep in red and yellow charred wrappings of firecrackers.

But it was a good job well done. Devils and evil spirits

must have scattered in all directions before the joss. And all Celestials automatically became a year older on New Year's Day.

I picked up Sari while following the parade. We turned to walk down Casuarina Avenue together. Suddenly she stopped, and I saw her raise her walking stick and strike a native such a blow that I thought it must have cracked his chest. In a very terrible voice she said, "You black swine!" I feared she was going to strike him again (it is the law that no white may strike a native under any provocation), but he was gone. I looked at her uncomprehending, thinking that she had suddenly lost her mind. It seemed that the kanaka, probably stupid from celebrating the day with an excess of betel-nut, had said "Good day, missus" as he passed us. This, too, is a serious offense, for no native is permitted to speak to a white woman unless he is spoken to. At any rate, Sari had evened up the score.



XXXII

HOME ON A "LIMEY"

RABAUL had changed while I was wandering among the lovely little islands and while I fought fever in the hospital above the city. All of a sudden it had begun to grow, not so much in size as in ambition. Plans were under way for two or three new stores, which would mean that luxuries would not be at such a premium as hitherto. Already a radical change for the better in a cheap American automobile had made itself known, even in New Guinea, and the one garage featured a picture of a jolly little sedan and roadster.

Carpenter's trade store, where I had had a job, was perking up. An Australian girl had set up a manicuring and hair-dressing booth there, and was at least managing to hold her own despite the devastating effect of Rabaul's humid climate on marcel. Another Australian woman had traveled out on the *Marsina* from Sydney, and was at the moment holding an exhibit of imported dresses and hats and shoes at the European Hotel, and feminine Rabaul was appearing attired in almost the snappy perfection of a New York stenographer. But, alas, silks do not last long in the tropics, and mildew attacks even the most fashionable of dancing slippers, and the dampness is fatal to flimsy hats. Presently the fancy import

shops winked out, and a lady returned to Sydney disappointed and wiser. You can't make a Paris of Rabaul.

A new road-house had opened up out on the splendid north shore; and up at Salamaua, where gradually the airplane is simplifying the soul-searing difficulties of getting to the gold fields, there was beginning a new gold rush. Mushroom companies were floating gold stocks, and their advance agents were trooping to the colorful little capital. Carpenter's, the Melanesia Company, and Burns-Philp were preparing for reorganizations and a pick-up in trade; they were importing clerks from "down south," downy-faced youths who knew nothing of the life of the tropics and who talked a great deal about this "land of opportunity." I wondered whether this gathering-in of the innocents were not merely another form of recruiting, whether the brilliant future in a lotus-eaters' land had not been dangled before them instead of the usual bit of mirror, trade scent, or bright length of calico. For the few strong ones, who would struggle through by hard and intelligent application, and who would stay away from drinking, and would rise to the challenge of the new country, for them no doubt there was a future. But not for the weaklings.

The spirit of Rabaul, that voluptuous, languorous-eyed, heartless Circe, was regarding these invaders with a lazy smile; few of them would escape her spell.

The old timers in the Territory were not taking kindly to the invaders. They knew the stuff that stands the ordeal of Melanesia, and they had little faith in the new product.

What belonged to Rabaul had altered little. The changing guard of police-boys marched sprucely up Casuarina Avenue at morning and at sunset, eyes stonily straight ahead, very self-important, their flat sailor-hats set absurdly atop

kinky wool. On rainy days the natives ambled along roadsides sheltered by a banana leaf, while their masters fared forth beneath gay paper Japanese parasols.

My job was offered to me again, and I took it for a while. Three months had made, as usual, a complete change in the staff. Even Sari had been fired; she had told the manager what she thought of him, probably including his wife. Unless the importations of "clarks" worked out as intended, business in Rabaul would still be in the hands of nomadic drifters.

I say "nomadic," and yet upon returning from my haphazard wanderings through the archipelago I found no one who had seen as much of Melanesia in general as I had. Nevertheless, after nearly a year, living as I had at the very heart of the South Pacific, I felt a sense of defeat, felt that I really knew nothing below the surface of that enigmatic country. Its mysteries are so profound, its people so alien, its traditions and beliefs so poles apart from our own.

And now malaria descended upon me. One morning I was well, the next a disconcerting heaviness of head and mind were upon me, rapidly progressing to a racking headache, and then iciness and chattering of teeth, and utter misery. Even the tropic sun that beat upon me as I walked along Casuarina Avenue could not warm me. There is only one thing to do when malaria attacks—drop in the first convenient place where you can stretch out, cover yourself with coats and blankets, and with the help of aspirin and quinine sweat it out, until the bounding temperature subsides. It may take only a couple of hours before "Richard is himself again." But once you are subject to malaria it is wise to think about leaving the tropics, at least for a while.

After a time I found I was becoming the victim of the

advanced kind of malaria that returns every other day as regularly as the clock goes round. I was learning to dread my turns as an insomniac dreads nightfall. Rabaul, too, was taking too strong a hold on me. And Paris was singing in my ears. The thought of home tugged at my heart. My adventure, as an adventure, was pretty well rounded out. Yes, I would pull up the roots—give one mighty tug, and go!

But first, thought I, I will go to my original particular objective, Port Moresby in Papua. So I engaged a passage on the next boat for Samarai, intending to cross thence on the *Papuan Chief* to Port Moresby.

A week before my scheduled sailing I awoke one morning at sunrise and, looking down at the harbor, saw lying quietly in the tinted reflection of the volcano across the lagoon a tramp freighter. She was battered and not very clean as to paint, but she was a welcome sight to see. I knew she was there for copra, and would be bound for no other place than Marseilles. I wanted to start home at once. I wanted to walk up Fifth Avenue. I wanted to go to the opera. I no longer cared about Port Moresby in Papua.

That day I met the master of the *Roseric*. The broad veranda of the European Hotel is Rabaul's popular meeting place for the noon cocktail. He was there. I liked his looks even from a distance, despite the fact that one eye was well bandaged and that there was a cross of adhesive plaster on his chin. This, in Rabaul, might mean one of many things. The first guess was that he had got tipsy and had had a little row with a gentleman bigger than himself. This was all wrong. He had been cranking a Ford and it had kicked him. That's dinkum.

An introduction was easy. I began treatment at once. My problem was difficult, for sometimes skippers of freighters

won't take women aboard. The first setback I encountered was that the *Roseric* could not carry passengers, either male or female; it was in her charter, or whatever it is that determines what a ship can and can't do. Furthermore, no woman had ever made a voyage aboard her. It looked serious for my plans, but I had the will to sail on the *Roseric*.

Good master of the *Roseric*! His was one of the kindest hearts that ever beat beneath a tunic. But he didn't see how he could help me out. There was no place on his ship for a woman to put up, even if a passenger were possible. It took three days to make him see things my way.

At last, probably worn out by my pleadings and arguments, my pathetic picture of how I was stranded far from home in the middle of Melanesian seas, he said: "I'll tell you what I'll do, girl. If you'll sign on as a member of the crew I can get you as far as Singapore. I'll give up my cabin to you as far as there."

Sign on as crew! It was exactly what I wanted. I was convinced that I'd make a swell stewardess—on a tramp freighter. I gambled on the possibility that he would see me through to Marseilles, if I came up to scratch as far as Singapore. And that is exactly what he did do. The voyage to Marseilles was to take fifty days. We were to stop at Singapore, Port Said, and Suez en route. We were to travel a path through fabulous waters—around New Guinea through Dampier Straits, on through the Banda, Flores, and Java seas. We were to travel among the East Indies, would skirt the coast of Arabia, and I should travel in the Waters of Africa—the Waters of Africa!

And now that it is all over, my official discharge, tendered by the British consul at Marseilles, bears witness to the best job I ever had! It should be a good passport for another

tramp-ship adventure, for under the legend, "Copy of Report of Character," W. Forsyth, Master, testified that as a stewardess my "Ability" and "General Character" were both "Very good—A202."

§

We sailed away one evening. From behind the volcano, The Mother, the great full moon pushed steadily up, as by a mighty unseen hand. Riding lights burned brightly from the masts of little schooners and from two dilapidated inter-island steamers. A newly arrived copra ship, the old *Antonia*, loomed a black hulk in midstream. Each of these last, in turn, blew good-by blasts to us as we set out. Each we acknowledged with three purring roars.

Leaning out, drinking it all in, as one takes a last look at a beloved thing, I could hardly bear to leave. Between the ships' salutes I could hear the beating of kundus up in the hills; the roll of the hidden drums passed on the word from jungle village to jungle village that the "big fella s'ip" was departing. Signal fires glowed here and there in the somber mountains behind Rabaul.

Steadily we pulled out to sea. The friendly little schooners and the friendly lights along the shore grew fainter . . . we rounded Gazelle Peninsula.

Good-by, New Guinea! Farewell, Rabaul!



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